The Industry's Largest Circulation Trade Weekly

MCV
The Market for Home Computing & Video Games

Issue 66 Friday December 17 1999

Millennium Recruitment

jester interactive
Christmas '99

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Calender 2000

January

Mon		3	10	17	24	31
Tue		4	11	18	25	
Wed		5	12	19	26	
Thur		6	13	20	27	
Fri		7	14	21	28	
Sat	1	8	15	22	29	
Sun	2	9	16	23	30	

February

Mon		7	14	21	28
Tue	1	8	15	22	29
Wed	2	9	16	23	
Thur	3	10	17	24	
Fri	4	11	18	25	
Sat	5	12	19	26	
Sun	6	13	20	27	

March

Mon		6	13	20	27
Tue		7	14	21	28
Wed	1	8	15	22	29
Thur	2	9	16	23	30
Fri	3	10	17	24	31
Sat	4	11	18	25	
Sun	5	12	19	26	

April

Mon		3	10	17	24
Tue		4	11	18	25
Wed		5	12	19	26
Thur		6	13	20	27
Fri		7	14	21	28
Sat	1	8	15	22	29
Sun	2	9	16	23	30

May

Mon	1	8	15	22	29
Tue	2	9	16	23	30
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Thur	4	11	18	25	
Fri	5	12	19	26	
Sat	6	13	20	27	
Sun	7	14	21	28	

June

Mon		5	12	19	26
Tue		6	13	20	27
Wed		7	14	21	28
Thur	1	8	15	22	29
Fri	2	9	16	23	30
Sat	3	10	17	24	
Sun	4	11	18	25	

July

Mon		3	10	17	24	31
Tue		4	11	18	25	
Wed		5	12	19	26	
Thur		6	13	20	27	
Fri		7	14	21	28	
Sat	1	8	15	22	29	
Sun	2	9	16	23	30	

August

Mon		7	14	21	28
Tue	1	8	15	22	29
Wed	2	9	16	23	30
Thur	3	10	17	24	31
Fri	4	11	18	25	
Sat	5	12	19	26	
Sun	6	13	20	27	

September

Mon		4	11	18	25
Tue		5	12	19	26
Wed		6	13	20	27
Thur		7	14	21	28
Fri	1	8	15	22	29
Sat	2	9	16	23	30
Sun	3	10	17	24	

October

Mon		2	9	16	23	30
Tue		3	10	17	24	31
Wed		4	11	18	25	
Thur		5	12	19	26	
Fri		6	13	20	27	
Sat		7	14	21	28	
Sun	1	8	15	22	29	

November

Mon		6	13	20	27
Tue		7	14	21	28
Wed	1	8	15	22	29
Thur	2	9	16	23	30
Fri	3	10	17	24	
Sat	4	11	18	25	
Sun	5	12	19	26	

December

Mon		4	11	18	25
Tue		5	12	19	26
Wed		6	13	20	27
Thur		7	14	21	28
Fri	1	8	15	22	29
Sat	2	9	16	23	30
Sun	3	10	17	24	31

Fold

9,000 ...that's 3,000 more than our rival
UK & INTERNATIONAL EDITION
The Industry's Largest Circulation Trade Weekly
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MCV
The Market for Home Computing & Video Games

Yash Chadha scores again for Planet with double DVD label exclusive

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Mark Strachan on the unstoppable rise of Gameplay since its flotation

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Andrea Griffith set to leave Fox, but will return with new PR venture

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HMV prepares to drop N64

Another entertainment chain is pulling back from Nintendo flagship, possibly altogether by Easter

ENTERTAINMENT chain HMV could pull out of the N64 market by next Easter.

The High Street giant would not confirm to MCV that the Nintendo format would be dropped, but a source revealed that HMV will stock only the biggest releases - such as Perfect Dark and Pokemon Stadium - in its largest stores.

The rest of the chain will cut back on hardware and software from the beginning of the year, with most stores likely to have dedicated the space to other more profitable formats by March.

Nintendo's prime format is fast becoming a no-go zone

It has also been known for some time that discount retailer MVC is shifting away from N64 in January.

It was one of the first to heavily discount the machine, as part of a summer promotion *(MCV 14/5)*.

And the news isn't much better from the independent retail sector. MCV's recent extensive survey of 100 specialist stores revealed that some 41 per cent are looking to at least cut back on the format some time next year.

The market's largest games retailer Electronics Boutique has offered some cheer, however, by insisting that it will continue to fully back the format for the foreseeable future.

City beckoning for SoftwareFirst.com

ANOTHER ONLINE retailer, SoftwareFirst.com, is set to follow Gameplay into the City.

The company, set up almost two years ago as a traditional mail order operation, has also recently received some £400,000 of funding to finance its move into online.

An IPO is being lined up for the spring. It will give SoftwareFirst a real chance to compete with the likes of leading specialist online retailers such as Gameplay.

Its stock will be traded on the AIM, with the company focusing much of its future attention on games, whilst also offering music and video products.

Take 2 joins super-league

THE STAGGERING growth of Take 2 Interactive continues, with global turnover topping $300m.

The US publisher is due to post its FY '99 financials (to the end of October) today.

Analyst expectations of around $290m revenue were due to be surpassed, with Europe at over $100m and all profit targets beaten.

The jump from global sales of $191m in FY 1998 to over $300m means growth of 60 per cent.

It caps a year notable for growth in product portfolio as well as key acquisitions and expansion of its Jack Of All Games arm.

Take 2 expects future output to be PC-led in terms of format support, but analysts are expecting another leap, up to $400m.

And Wall Street confidence was boosted earlier this week by Individual Investor Group naming it as a 'Magic 25' firm - an honour only given to those set to see major share price growth.

UK market to hit £1.5bn

THE IMPACT of Sony PlayStation discounts is still to be determined, but a new ELSPA/Screen Digest report predicts that the UK games market will hit £1.5bn this year.

The research shows that the UK market is up by some 13.8 per cent over last year and places it at the top of the Euro league table. By software-only, the UK will reach £1 billion, significantly ahead of the German market at just over £625m.

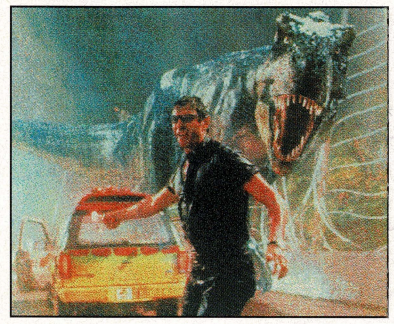
Europe as a whole will be worth £3.4 billion, bigger than the US.

Konami goes to Hollywood

JAPANESE giant Konami has clinched its biggest licensing deal by teaming up with Hollywood giant Universal.

The publisher is currently enjoying its best sales in the home software market *(MCV 10/12)* but wants to drive further into the mainstream, with emphasis on creating titles that have mass market appeal in the US and Europe as well as its home territory.

A global strategic alliance has been struck with the Universal Interactive Studios (UIS) arm to develop, market and distribute software for all the next-gen games formats.



Konami will gets it teeth into Universal properties

Production will be funded by Konami. It will also market and distribute the UIS titles. These will initially be based on properties such as Jurassic Park, Bruce Lee, Dr. Seuss and Woody Woodpecker.

UIS, best known for the best-selling Crash Bandicoot and Spyro The Dragon titles published via Sony, has recently expanded development to encompass Universal Studios' franchises and further original properties.

MILLENNIUM MELTDOWN?

Tomb Raider The Last Revelation 10/10 Official PlayStation Magazine "An atmospheric,

Gex Deep Cover Gecko 92% Total PlayStation "This game is compulsively addictive from f

Powerstone 92% DC UK "The graphics are breathtaking - probably the best we've ever seen"

Michael Owens World League Soccer 99 94% Extreme PlayStation "A mind blowing

Uefa Champions League 9 **Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines 93%** Gamesmaster "Command

Warzone 2100 9/10 Official PlayStation Magazine "Without a dou

Gangsters 9/10 PC Gaming World "Like it or we break your knees"

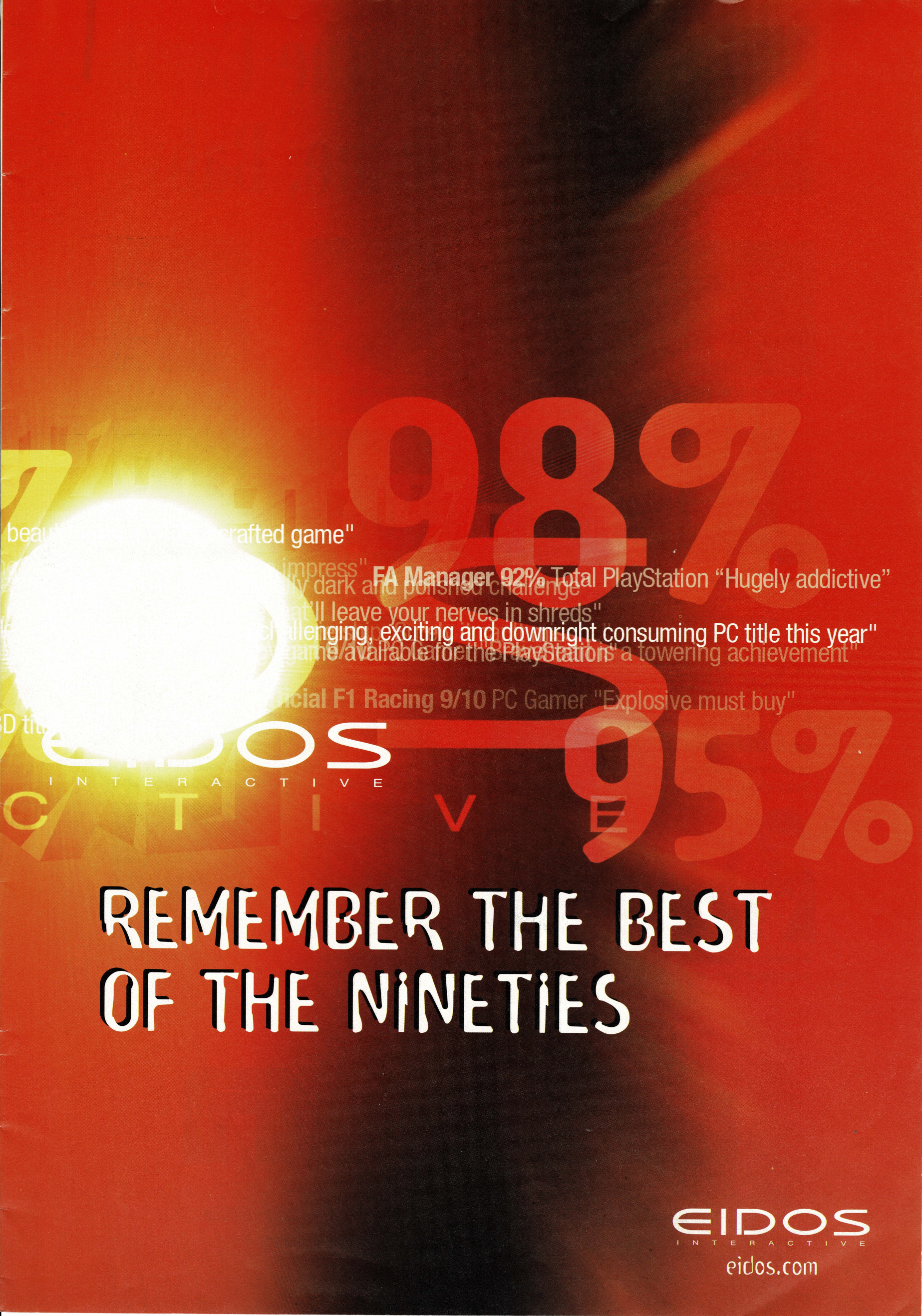
Legacy of Kain 96% Extreme PlayStation "Soul Reaver is stunning, puts other 3

INTERA

eidos interactive ltd. communication details

Eidos UK
Wimbledon Bridge House
1 Hartfield Road
Wimbledon
London SW19 3RU
United Kingdom
T: 0208 636 3000
F: 0208 636 3001

firstname.lastname@eidos.co.uk


98%
FA Manager 92% Total PlayStation “Hugely addictive”
challenging, exciting and downright consuming PC title this year"
cial F1 Racing 9/10 PC Gamer "Explosive must buy"
95%
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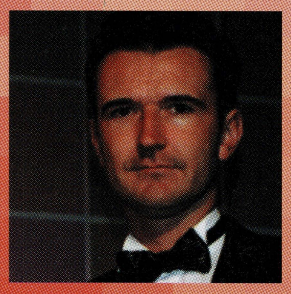
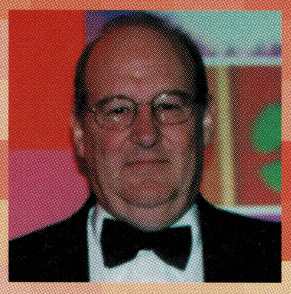


Developer of the Year 1999
Reflections

MCV Retailer of the Year 1999
Electronics Boutique

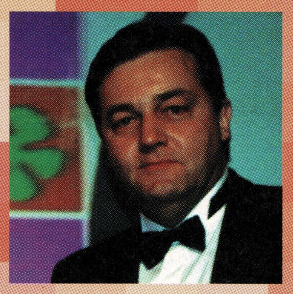
MCV Distributor of the Year 1999
GEM Distribution

Magazine of the Year 1999
Official PlayStation Magazine



Portable Game of the Year 1999
Pokémon

PC Game of the Year 1999
Command and Conquer:Tiberian Sun



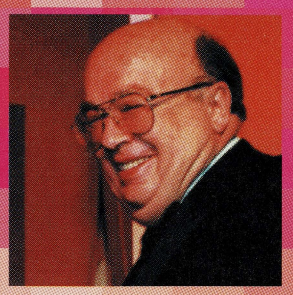
Console Game of the Year 1999
Driver

Publisher of the Year 1999
Electronic Arts

Millennium Achievement Award
Philip Ley for Sonic Marketing

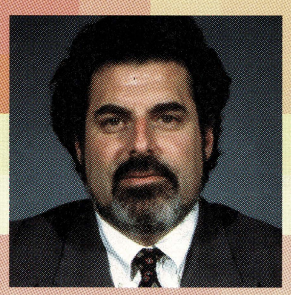
Millennium Achievement Award
Chris Deering for Pong

Millennium Achievement Award
Nick Lambert for Sinclair ZX81

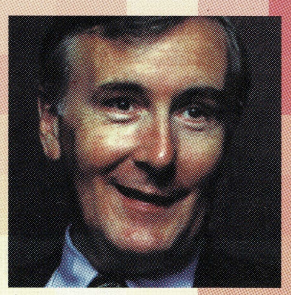


Millennium Achievement Award
Frank Herman for Budget Software

Millennium Achievement Award
J F Cecillon for Sega recovery



Industry Achievement Award
Mark Lewis



Millennium Award for a
Lifetime of Achievement
Howard Lincoln

Rear of the Year 1999

indin

Over £7 million has been raised for a host of children's charities over Indin's lifetime.
This has all been made possible by the most generous of industries.
Thank you all.

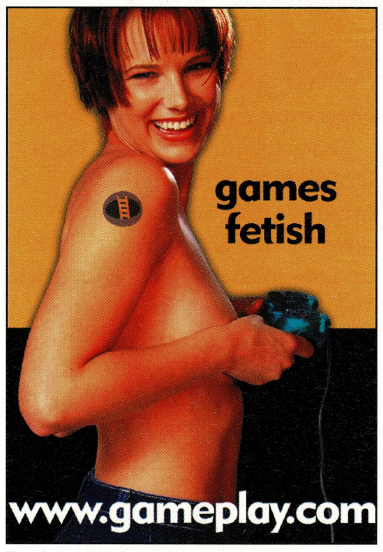
Sky takes Gameplay slice

Share price soars as Sky pays £10m for 10 per cent of the firm that can't keep out of the news

GAMEPLAY has continued its impressive wave of corporate activity by sealing a major investment deal with BSkyB.

The online retailer, which only floated in the summer, has seen the broadcaster take a 10 per cent slice of the company for £10m. Gameplay's share price soared instantly, rising from £2.54 to £3.77 within an hour of the news. This had risen to £4.20 by the end of Monday (December 13th).

Interestingly, as a result of the initial share price leap, Gameplay now has a market capitalisation that is significantly higher than the leading High Street games retailer Electronics Boutique.



New investment from BSkyB has seen Gameplay's share price leap. And its market cap is now higher than High Street retailer Electronics Boutique

Under a separate agreement, Gameplay has entered into a strategic alliance with BSkyB through which it will become BSkyB's games e-commerce partner across its online properties - including the portal Sky.co.uk.

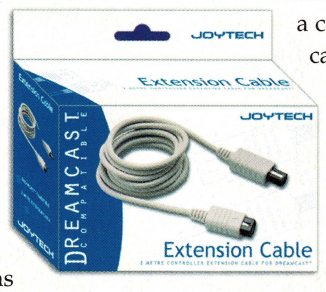
Gameplay has also committed to develop a series of games TV shows exclusively for BSkyB. This follows its launch of a games retail channel on Open, the digital TV platform in which BSkyB has a 32.5 per cent shareholding.

Agreements have also been concluded in the past week which will see Gameplay take a presence on the online shopping portals BT Spree and myTAXI.com.

Joytech backs Sega

STOCK-STARVED retailers will be pleased to learn that peripherals giant Joytech is to launch a range of Dreamcast compatible hardware early next year.

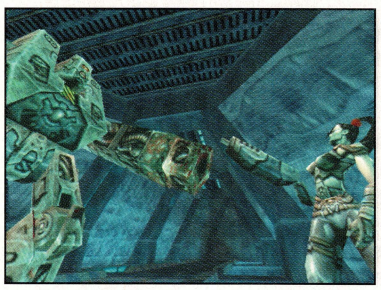
January will see the release of 1MB and 4MB memory cards for the system. Both versions will be available in three different colour schemes and will retail at £12.99 and £17.99 respectively.



Additionally, Joytech will be introducing three connecting cables for Dreamcast, namely a Scart cable, AV cable and a controller extension cable. All will retail at £7.99.

"We have turned a new corner in next-gen technology, with an aim to provide both a cost and product effective range," commented deputy managing director of Joytech Europe Matthew Lamprell.

No shock here



The Daikatana saga continues, with the game officially missing its latest release date of December 17th 1999 by at least a month, possibly longer. The time-travelling first person shooter, developed by John Romero's Ion Storm, was originally due to appear via publisher Eidos Interactive in December 1997. And two years later, the game is still being 'tweaked'.

NetLok arrives for Web safety

COPY PROTECTION specialist Pan Technology has introduced NetLok, a new method of encrypting music, games and videos over the Internet.

The system allows data to be downloaded from the Net and used on the receiving PC, but does not allow this information to be copied or passed on.

The system uses an individual encryption process, meaning that a generic crack of the system is not possible. Thus, publishers will be able to sell digital content online without fear of piracy.

The system will be of particular interest to games publishers. With Sony claiming that PS2 will be able to download movies, games and video, the NetLok process could ensure each transaction would be a genuine one.

MCV yearbook offer

ELSPA this week publishes its long-awaited industry yearbook - with a special discount being offered to MCV's 9,100 readers.

The European Leisure Software Yearbook 2000 boasts UK market data provided by ELSPA's partners ChartTrack and Screen Digest. It covers market value, sales by format, installed bases, sales by month, sales by region, publisher market shares, best-selling games, VSC and BBFC ratings and non-games markets.

Information on the major European territories is also featured, while a selection of in-depth articles cover areas such as copy protection and fighting piracy, marketing, development and the PC sector.

The directory section features over 500 companies in the publishing, distribution, online, development, hardware, media, marketing and legal sectors.

YEARBOOK: Essential - and only £40 to MCV readers

The Yearbook normally costs £50, but is available to MCV readers at the special discounted price of £40. To order your copy of the Yearbook 2000, contact Amy Garrett on 0171 819 1111.

Please quote MCV in order to receive your discount.

Software Revenues

Week ending December 11th

	Last Week	This Week
Total Market	£33.6m	**£40.0m**
Full Price Console	£18.1m	**£22.0m**
Full Price PC	£9.6m	**£10.6m**
Budget Console	£4.3m	**£5.1m**
Budget PC	£1.6m	**£2.0m**
Cumulative 1999:		**£743.1m**

Top Earners This Week

1. Tomb Raider 4 (Eidos) PSX/PC
90,000 more sales last week **£2,657,684**

2. FIFA 2000 (EA Sports) PSX/PC
300,000 units in six weeks **£1,585,739**

3. Tomorrow Never Dies (EA/MGM) PSX
Licensed to sell buckets **£1,577,954**

4. Champ. Manager 99/00 (Eidos) PC
Sales up 27% last week **£848,985**

5. Crash Team Racing (SCEE) PSX
TV has boosted sales **£827,994**

Source: MCV/ChartTrack/Elspa

Share Prices

	Price 11/12/99	One week % change
US	**$**	**%**
3Dfx	9.75	14.71%
3DO	9.375	-0.67%
Acclaim	5.531	-13.66%
Activision	15.688	0.80%
Adrenalin Interactive	4.25	-23.60%
Brilliant Digital	2.938	-11.32%
Creative Technology	17.688	15.04%
eGames	3.625	24.74%
Eidos	98.688	-2.77%
Electronic Arts	114.188	4.22%
Electronics Boutique	22.875	5.17%
Funco	19.5	8.33%
GT Interactive	1.875	-6.25%
Hasbro	21	0.90%
HearMe.com	26.75	44.59%
Intel	72.25	-8.18%
Intergraph	4.25	-4.90%
Interplay	3.125	49.24%
Mattel	13.438	-5.70%
Microsoft	93.875	-2.34%
Midway	23.375	-1.84%
Number Nine Visual Tech.	0.75	-14.29%
Recoton	7.375	-5.61%
S3	8.75	-12.50%
Silicon Graphics	11.75	18.99%
Take-Two	16.313	17.57%
THQ	32.938	-13.32%
Toys R Us	15	-8.05%
Walt Disney	28.031	-0.78%
UK	**£**	**%**
Elect.Boutique	0.375	-10.29%
Eidos	60.5	-4.36%
Future Net	8.9	0.91%
Gameplay.com	4.1	49.09%
Online	3.365	4.83%
Rage	0.515	-10.90%
SCi	4.175	-2.91%
France	**Euro**	**%**
Cryo	34.05	2.41%
Infogrames	134.5	-1.82%
Kalisto	49	4.48%
Titus	46.25	15.65%
Ubi Soft	186	2.82%
Vivendi	92.45	13.02%

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Comment

Christmas unit leap hasn't been matched by value

NOW THEN, as much as I would hate to be the Grinch that steals Christmas in the very same week that ELSPA and Screen Digest proclaim the UK as the biggest in Europe, I have to say that our world isn't entirely tinsel-topped and sugar-coated right now.

I wonder if that total market value of £1.5 billion for 1999 proclaimed by the researcher types on our front cover this week might actually be a figure that the market *should* reach rather than *will* reach.

Sure, software unit sales are way up, probably hardware, too, if you take into account Dreamcast's arrival. But there is simply no getting away from this on-going issue of lower prices. Notwithstanding the Sega machine, consoles and games are cheaper than ever. The PlayStation discounting, in particular, will have a massive impact on the revenues pulled in through the final few weeks of the year, given that it is the biggest sector of the market and that it sees its biggest volumes at this time of year.

Has the unit increase been enough to validate retailers' claims that sales would grow in line with price drops?

A look at the facts at least partly defends my pessimism right now. If we consider that the Christmas market really kicked in from the week ending Saturday November 27th (the week that Tomorrow Never Dies and Soul Calibur arrived) and has been followed by a bumper fortnight (with sales of Tomb Raider 4, Championship Manager 99/00 and FIFA 2000 going into turbo-mode), then how would you expect the year-on-year comparison to look?

You would expect '99 to be up on '98, of course. And in terms of units it is. MCV figures for the total market, marked up from ChartTrack and ELSPA's monitoring of around 80 per cent of the business, has total units marginally up on the corresponding week in '98 at 1,058,766 for the week to November 27th, 12 per cent up on '98 at 1,294,352 for the week ending December 4th and 16 per cent up on '98 at a stonking 1,520,925,740 for the week ending December 11th.

By revenue, however, these three weeks look somewhat different. The industry is still filling its saddlebags with cash, but lower prices mean lower returns. For the week ending November 27th, the value of all consumer software sold in the UK was £27.5m rather than the £32.6m recorded the previous year. That's a dip of over five per cent.

It only gets marginally better in the following two weeks. For the week to December 3rd, software sales hit £33.6m, four per cent down on the £35m achieved during the same week of last year. In the week to December 11th, a week in which the market reached its highpoint of the year at £39.7m, value still trailed two per cent behind the money raked in 12 months ago (£40.45m).

Like I said, overall, the market will still be up on 1998. And it's impressive that the market has grown during a year of discounting with the ageing PlayStation still leading the charge. But has the unit increase been enough to validate some retailers' claims that volumes would increase in line with price drops?

By my calculations, it seems not.

Stuart Dinsey
Stuart.Dinsey@mcvuk.com

Talking Shop

Stock problems holding back bigger sales

IT'S FUNNY HOW you discover things during idle chit-chats with colleagues, but whilst talking to GB Systems, who wrote the Game Guide EPOS System, I found out about some interesting trends amongst the indies. GB Systems now gets data from the EPOS users every week and it is showing up the roller-coaster ride they endure with stock allocation.

On the release of a new triple-A Dreamcast title we witness a week when even PlayStation games are being outsold, quickly followed by a total slump when the title goes out of stock at distribution. The figures prove that in one week House of the Dead 2 was the number one title and the next week it was not even in the Top 20.

This trend is mirrored across all formats and and conclusively shows that it is the lack of stock that is effectively holding back many of the independents. Ten national multiple stores were then called and all reported they could supply the game.

Nationally, most indies are reporting lower volume of sales through their stores this December than last year. Often, I am told this is due to stock shortages, but is also attributed to e-commerce and the ready availability of console games from so many different types of stores.

One indie even reports that his local chemist now sells a selection of PlayStation games and is actively trying to source Dreamcast supplies!

Chris Ratcliff is proprietor of independent publisher Game Guide Publications.

Chris Ratcliff
Chris@game-guide.co.uk

Millennium margin

Sales of Y2K Kit set to leap as the clock counts down to 2000

RETAILERS have two more weeks to help consumers deal with the Millennium Bug, and enjoy extra margin in the process.

That's the message from Koch Distribution, which handles McAfee's Y2K Survival Kit. It downloads and applies any Y2K updates available via the Internet. The title identifies over 5,000 programs and also adds a check of the Windows date format, ensuring the year is represented by four digits rather than two.

"Koch still believes that there is a retail opportunity for these products in the last weeks of 1999," a Koch spokesperson told MCV. "These are high margin products that should still have a strong shelf life into next year."

The Millennium Bug could result in dates on PCs being read as 1900 rather than 2000 meaning that files could be erased.

The Y2K Survival Kit retails at £22.95. For more information on the McAfee range, call Koch Distribution on 01256 707767.

Take 2 signs War Monkeys

SILICON DREAMS' PC strategy game War Monkeys looks to have been signed by Take 2 Interactive.

The game system is described as 'Battle Tactics' and allows players to take command of individual units as well as a whole army.

War Monkeys has been in development for two years and has previously received interest from the likes of GTI and Blue Byte.

The game, however, will now join a strong roster of strategy titles at Take 2 including Hidden and Dangerous, Spec Ops and Rainbow 6: Rogue Spear. A Q1 2000 release seems likely.

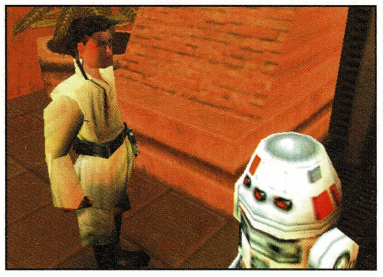
War Monkeys will join the Take 2 catalogue

Neither Take 2 nor Silicon Dreams would confirm the publishing deal at press time.

Lucas to return with Force

AFTER A TERRIFIC year, LucasArts is putting the final touches to its next wave of Star Wars Episode One titles.

The US studio is set to follow the success of its Phantom Menace and Racer titles with a new PlayStation arcade game and an all-new game for PlayStation 2. It has also confirmed a version of Racer for Dreamcast.



More Star Wars titles are scheduled for next year

Jedi Power Battles is a scrolling platform game. LucasArts is anticipating an April release for the game in the US, but a date for Europe has yet to be confirmed.

The PlayStation 2 game is at a much earlier stage, while the Dreamcast version of Racer is expected in the spring.

UR Wired adds online aid

CURRENTLY ADVERTISING heavily on satellite TV, online retailer UR Wired has now launched an online customer service system.

Customers ordering online can conduct real-time chats with UR Wired staff using a similar system to existing 'chat room' software. Staff will be on hand during business hours and can provide information on release dates, pricing and shipping times. UR Wired currently registers 2.3m hits each month.

UR Wired has created the system to add a more personal element to online shopping.

"There really is no need for games players to shop elsewhere," commented UR Wired founder Mattias Lamotte.

Planet bolsters DVD drive

Labels choose the distributor which has helped games stores compete in a lucrative market

TWO EXCLUSIVE DVD deals have been struck by Planet Distribution, with the Salvation and Covent Garden Pioneer labels being impressed by the Waltham Abbey firm's impact in the sector.

Salvation is well known amongst horror film fans as an independent film label that includes sub-labels Redemption, Jezebel and Purgatory. The films have enjoyed some success on the video format and Planet has high hopes for the label on DVD.

The first four Salvation titles will be available in January, with an average of two films released each month thereafter. A total of 24 films are expected to be available by 2001.

The Covent Garden Pioneer range boasts exclusive recordings of opera and ballet performed at the Covent Garden Opera House.

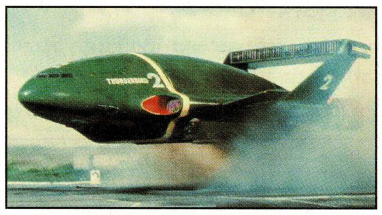
The range includes such classics as The Nutcracker, Otello, and Romeo and Juliet.

"The Salvation range has been supported well on video and we expect strong sales on DVD," said Steve Jackson, head of Planet DVD. "Additionally, the Covent Garden Pioneer range will bolster the presence of the type of material sorely lacking on DVD."

Thunderbirds are go for SCi

SCi has completed another potentially lucrative licensing agreement, whilst also confirming its move onto from the AIM to a main City listing.

The firm has signed a deal with Carlton International to acquire the worldwide gaming rights to the cult Thunderbirds series. SCi will develop titles for next generation consoles and online gaming platforms, timed to follow the re-release worldwide of the digitally-remastered 32-part series.



Cult TV series is latest big licence signing for SCi

"SCi's investment in the Thunderbirds video game once again illustrates the massive pulling power of the show," commented Thunderbirds' creator Gerry Anderson.

Sci's chief executive Jane Cavanagh added: "Thunderbirds is a classic among licensed properties, an icon brand with mass appeal and proven success."

This latest agreement follows Sci's recent licensing agreements for The Italian Job and The Great Train Robbery.

■ Meanwhile, as predicted by MCV two months ago (MCV 15/10), SCi will move from the AIM to take a full London Stock Market listing in the New Year.

Tivola double deal

CHILDREN's software publisher Tivola unveiled two new promotions for retail this week.

The first, with WH Smith, features a Max plush toy bundled free with any of the four Max Play and Learn titles.

Additionally, Tivola has unveiled a promotion specially for indies. Any stores ordering two or more copies of Tivola's Great Games Compendium before December 31st will be entered into a draw to win a one of five fully stocked Tivola stands. The total retail value of the stand is £430.

Comet tips Sega for top

ELECTRICAL CHAIN Comet believes that the Dreamcast will match PlayStation sales through its stores this Christmas, and claims it may even beat Sony's longtime market leader.

"We can see sales of both Dreamcast and PlayStation hardware and software moving forward over Christmas," a spokesperson told MCV. "But Dreamcast will probably do better because it's a fresher machine."

Comet is currently featuring the Sega console heavily in its

Comet is supporting Dreamcast heavily this Xmas

Christmas TV commercials. It is featured at both the beginning and end of the execution.

It is also currently offering attractive bundle deals on both Dreamcast and PlayStation.

Supermarkets sweep in

Specialist distributor pushes software into grocery sector

NON-SPECIALIST retailers, particularly supermarkets, are waking up to the huge profit potential of games.

Whilst Sainsburys has tied up with EB and Tesco has gunned for console sales, the efforts of niche distributor Cork International have boosted consumer software's presence across the whole sector.

Cork is a specialist software supplier to grocery and other non-specialist chains. It brokered GSP's recent '2-for-£15' deal across 180 Safeway stores and oversaw the creation of specially designed FSDUs.

Cork has also overseen a similar promotion, based on the Focus range of titles, with Tesco Ireland and Cork has also negotiated a deal to distribute Hasbro releases in motorway service stations.

GSP's UK sales director Steve Powell has been delighted with the results. "We're delighted to have the opportunity to promote through a grocery store during the busy Christmas period," he said.

Newswires

Online store upsets retail

Pioneering online retailer Simply Games struck a dagger at the heart of High Street chains and indies alike last weekend, by taking its on-going Dreamcast promotion into the national press. The firm tied up a promotional deal with the News of the World offering the console at just £169.99 and also took display ads in other Sundays. Money-off vouchers worth £50 and free Christmas delivery is being offered to consumers just for good measure.

Simply Games: *0800 169 2304*

...and Gameplay cuts too

Fellow online retailer Gameplay has been pushing its latest price offers through the national press too. These include Half-Life Opposing Force at £17.99, Tomb Raider IV at £27.99 and Soul Calibur at £32.99. The firm's tagline is simply 'Don't get ripped off!'.

Gameplay: *0207 959 8500*

Summer date for FF IX

Japanese giant Squaresoft stated last week that Final Fantasy IX will now be released in its home territory next summer, a delay of several months against the originally intended date. It has decided to leave a gap between the blockbuster and fellow RPG Dragon Quest VII, which is due in February.

Squaresoft: *0171 291 5100*

HotGen settles into new HQ

Fergus McGovern's HotGen Studios has completed its move to new premises at NLA Tower, 12-16 Addiscombe Road, Croydon. The relocation is part of an on-going expansion into online and next-generation consoles.

HotGen Studios: *020 8603 0555*

TLC indies deal rolls on

Koch Distribution will continue to push its excellent value TLC promotion for the indie sector right through to the end of January. The 'buy two, get one free' deal applies to all Sesame Street, reader Rabbit and Cluefinders products.

Koch Distribution: *01256 707767*

Aureal wins legal battle

Audio specialist Aureal was boosted this week by the news that a federal court jury had unanimously rejected Creative Technology's claims that its Vortex chips infringed a Creative patent. Aureal has called it 'a victory for innovation and competition' but Creative has said it will appeal.

Aureal: *01296 728088*

McLaren drives onto QVC

Skream's McLaren Steering Wheel for PlayStation was featured on shopping channel QVC for the first time this week. Meanwhile, following last week's story, the firm would like to point out that the PC version has a Double Tremor Vibration function, not Force Feedback and is due in February not December.

ED Games: *01344 885513*

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EDITION

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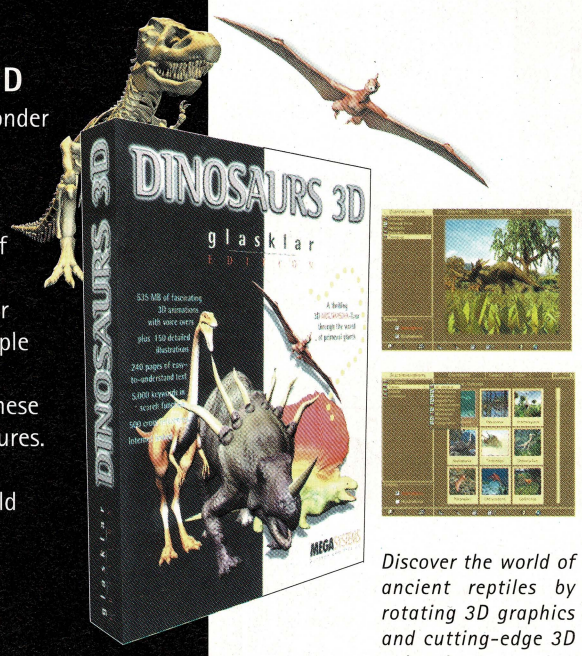
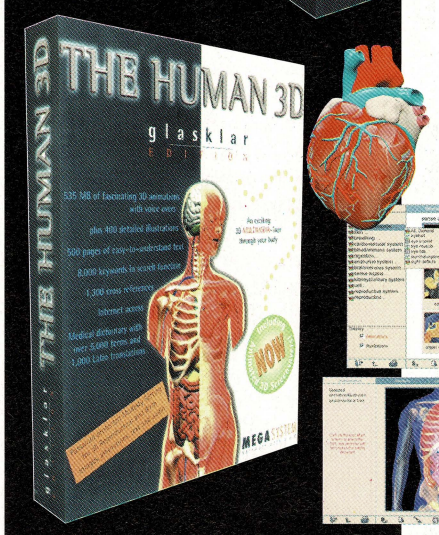
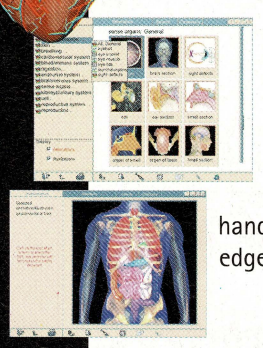


Discover the world of ancient reptiles by rotating 3D graphics and cutting-edge 3D animations.

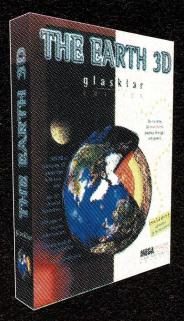


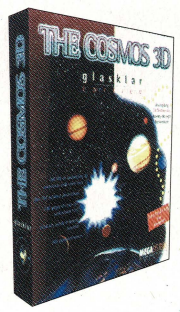
Human 3D

What makes the respiratory and circulatory sytems work? The Human 3D demonstrates the intricate workings of the human body during a hands-on, cutting-edge multimedia tour.



Available soon:





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NEWS

It's January 28th for GT2

Sony blockbuster to finally get off the starting grid next month

IT HAS MISSED Christmas, but Sony promised this week that Europe will receive Gran Turismo 2 on January 28th next year, in time to fully capitalise on the 'granny money' season.

The game was released last week in Japan and at time of press was due for a US release yesterday (Thursday December 16th).

Originally due in Europe on December 10th, it was delayed to allow for PAL optimisation.

"It's definitely coming on January 28th," a Sony Europe spokesperson confirmed.

GT2: The first surefire mega-hit of 2000

"The game is so huge, spanning a full two discs, it's just taking a while to convert from NTSC code."

The title will be backed by a huge £1m marketing campaign, including an extensive TV campaign and press advertising.

Retail warned over cuts

RESEARCH firm The Henley Centre has warned the High Street about the dangers of 'knee-jerk' price-cutting.

As newspapers join forces against 'Rip-off Britain' and the High Street war continues to rumble on, The Henley Centre is concerned that retailers are jeopardising their long-term future for short-term gain.

The consultancy also claims that, with the average household 40 per cent better off than in 1986, customers aren't as bargain-orientated as stores imagine.

Henley's director of consumer consultancy Martin Hayward describes the current trend as "frightening", but claims that only six per cent of Brits are keen bargain hunters.

"It is this small group that is putting 'Rip-off Britain' on the agenda, not the tidal wave of consumers we've been lead to believe," he said.

"But there is always more than one response to any situation and a short-term solution may turn out to be as unhelpful to the public as it is to business."

Charapak's retail rack attack

AS SOFTWARE MARCHES into supermarkets, a firm has emerged offering publishers and retailers affordable and specialised display units.

Charapak specialises in cardboard FSDUs and has recently expanded its range to cater for PC and CD packaging, with over 75 systems available.

The laminated units can also be pre-designed and printed to include artwork for specific titles and are customisable to incorporate different shelf sizes.

"The beauty of our approach is that it gives the buyer immediate access to creative display solutions," explained business development manager Mark Bunnell. "We take out the expense of initial design and tooling costs – the perfect recipe for cost effective promotional displays."

SC&T closes down Europe HQ

CONFUSION SURROUNDS the closure of peripherals manufacturer SC&T's UK office, with the US parent office unable to supply a reason why.

"The UK office has been shut, although we cannot give out any details as to why that has happened," stated SC&T's US based spokesman Gary Crunk.

MCV has discovered that a significant amount of SC&T stock is still stored in warehouses in Portsmouth, where the company was based. Although no longer available through SC&T itself, the company's range of products may still be distributed by some third party suppliers capitalising on the firms withdrawal from the UK.

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Conversion house expands

Brit studio Runecraft opts for gentle approach as it starts to move into the big league...

CONVERSION work is often perceived as a thankless task. But for Yorkshire-based Runecraft it has provded an ideal stepping stone to bigger, original projects.

With conversions of Monopoly, Scrabble, Barbie and Earthworm Jim 3D under its belt, Runecraft is happy earning a crust from the sector. Indeed the security of such work is what boss Martin Hooley perceives to be the key to the growth of the 65-strong studio – although he admits to disliking the term 'conversion.'

Security of conversion work has created a perfect platform for Runecraft's 65 staff to plan major expansion

"The role that we play is to evaluate successful products, re-design them for the new target platform and create the product - in many cases from the ground up," opens Hooley. "Some of the products that we work with are termed as 'conversions' - yet the product often doesn't even keep the logo of the original sku."

The team will grow to over 90 members in the New Year. Such plans demand a regular income, however, and therefore Hooley is naturally happy to stick to the conversion work that is growing Runecraft's reputation.

Original projects are on the cards, but Hooley is aware of the cost and is pragmatic. "We would not want to be involved in the creation of the next monster original franchise such as Lara Croft," he said. "But, we'd have no issue with being approached by Eidos to create Tomb Raider V. We have seen the pitfalls and casualties of doing a poor job of trying to create original products."

Runecraft is now completing work on Interplay's PlayStation version of Baldur's Gate and has a number of new titles to adapt. It has also been awarded a licence for Dreamcast, with a PlayStation 2 deal likely to follow.

"We're ramping up. 2000 will be a key year for us," added Hooley.

Capcom hits PS2 for six

DESPITE INITIAL reservations by its project leader Shinji Mikami, Capcom is throwing itself firmly behind PlayStation 2.

The firm has confirmed six titles for the new Sony console, including updates of its best-selling Dino Crisis and Resident Evil franchises. Ironically, Mikami, the producer and director of both series, has been one of the most vociferous developers to doubt the potential offered by the new console. He has voiced concerns over content for the machine (MCV 23/7), stating he believes it is a step forward aesthetically, but not in terms of gameplay.

However, Capcom has lined up Street Fighter EX3 to accompany the March launch in Japan, but Dino Crisis 2 and a new Resident Evil title will follow. Capcom is also using the 3D engine featured in both games for a Samurai title, Onimusha: Demon Warrior.

New Croydon studio emerges

ANOTHER NEW development team founded by ex-Probe members has emerged.

Following in the footsteps of Probe's Tony Beckwith and Pixel Planet, Matthew Nagy, David Shea and Emma Denson have left the Acclaim-owned studio to go it alone. Remaining within Croydon, the trio has founded Coyote and has already signed deals with Virgin and fellow studio Crawfish to set the ball rolling.

Its next job is a Dreamcast conversion, while it has also sent a demo of an original title to several leading publishers. "The feedback has been positive," offered Nagy. "We have spent the past year developing ideas and hope to achieve our goal of producing our first original title very soon."

Code Warrior

Time for a Dream-Box

If the market can't carry four consoles, how about three? Owain Bennallack speculates...

HERE'S A GOOD ONE - Microsoft is looking to buy Sega. True or false? Who knows.

But a very senior developer asked me what I thought earlier this week, crediting me as a bigger berry on the vine than is actually the case, alas.

Bluffing, I said that the rumour was in 'tight circulation'. First I've heard of it, in other words. Yet, like all the best industry tittle-tattle, it makes some sense.

It isn't hard to see the Windows CE'd, Internet-enabled Dreamcast as X-Box 1.0 (or at least X-Box 0.9). Sega has talked about its console being expandable and some have mooted revisions as early as 2001, but can the market really sustain two vaguely PC-compatible consoles?

And that's not to deride Sega - its strong Dreamcast launch in the West arguably means it is Microsoft whose plans need revising. Which ironically makes the deal look more credible.

Microsoft is said to be earmarking up to $2 billion to market X-Box. That's about five times what Sega spent on the Western launch of Dreamcast. But as Sega is the latest to prove, it's content that really shifts consoles. American gamers - pissed off with PC, polarised by PlayStation and stitched up by Nintendo - have returned to Sega simply for the games, not for any online, set-top revolution.

Like dummy presents under shopping centre Christmas trees, X-Box without equally compelling content will look like empty posturing. That's why everyone gives credence to Microsoft's jostling for a big games publisher, most recently GTi.

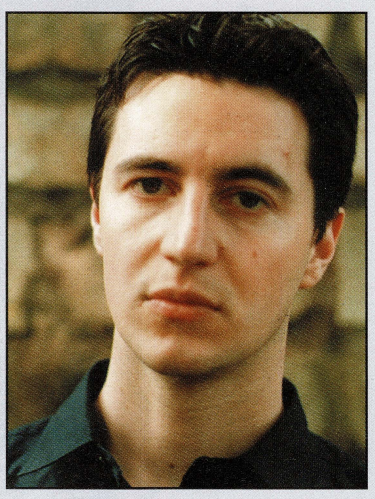
Microsoft could spend $2bn on X-Box. But, as Sega is the latest to prove, it's content that shifts units.

It needs to buy talent because its natural allies, PC-weaned developers, can be expected to make poor console games. The PC's strongest genres, first-person action and real-time strategy, both rely heavily on the brain and the mouse, not a tube of Pringles and a joypad.

In contrast, Sega makes legendary console games. X-Box and Sega could go together like, well, Sega and Dreamcast.

And despite Dreamcast's success, its maker remains in financial straits. Selling up to Microsoft to create a powerful East-West alliance wouldn't just bring some of the world's best games designers to X-Box - or 'Microsoft's Dreamcast 2.0' - it could also provide Microsoft with local maps into PC-apathetic Japan.

But before it all starts sounding too plausible, here's a reality check. In the March 1995 issue of Edge, John Edelson, then 3DO's European director of sales and marketing, argued that all publishers should support his console for the industry's common good. To this happy socialist declaration (which maybe explains why 3DO was soon just making



software) he added: "Wouldn't Sega make a great software vendor?"

Smirks aside, poor Sega. For years concerned rivals have urged it to abandon the hardware business. Doubtless in five years' time, today's speculation will seem as silly as 3DO's. Sega will have bought up a chunk of the fallen Microsoft and everyone will be urging Sony to stick to Gran Turismo sequels.

Nintendo, of course, will still be doing a roaring trade in Game Boys.

Owain Bennallack
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Newswire

Pokemon probe launched

Puerto Rico: A senior Government official has announced his concerns about the Pokemon craze and has duly launched an investigation into the phenomenon surrounding both the video games and trading cards. Roberto Cruz claims that he is looking to avoid the same problems in Puerto Rican schoolyards that have plagued the US, where stabbings over Pokemon tradings have been reported in New York, Atlanta and Quebec.

More Byte for Interplay

USA: Interplay has further bolstered its line-up of affiliate labels in the US, having signed a new deal with German publisher Blue Byte. The distribution agreement covers at least four PC titles, including Stephen King's F13, Battle Isle 4, The Settlers 4 and Dragon's Lair 3D.

Sega to sell online

Japan: Sega will begin selling downloadable games from the Internet early in the New Year, according to a report by the Nihon Keizai Shimbun. Strangely, the games will apparently be available for the Mega Drive format and the PC Engine console from NEC and can be played only once. They will cost Y100-300 and must be downloaded via a Dreamcast.

Sony takes flight

USA: Sony has signed a deal with Boeing Airplane Services to provide the Sony P@ssport In-Flight Entertainment system to six 747s. The system provides passengers with video and audio on demand, plus video games, shopping and web pages. The agreement between the two companies provides the option to install the system on 44 additional planes.

Square revises forecasts

Japan: Despite the storming success of Final Fantasy VIII worldwide, Squaresoft has revised its expected earnings for the financial year ending March 2000. The firm now predicts earnings of some Y13.8 billion, with the delay of FFIX until Q2 2000 blamed for the shortfall.

Midway's Double Whammy

USA: Midway's fortunes continue on the Dreamcast format, with the firm having last week snapped up awards for both Ready 2 Rumble Boxing and Hydro Thunder. The titles were listed as two of the best 10 overall video games in CBS' annual toy test. Midway was the only third-party publisher to have more than one game in the list.

Call **Lisa Foster** on **01992 535646** with your international news or e-mail lisa.foster@mcvuk.com

MCV WORLD NETWORK

German games market tops £1bn

PC shows biggest growth, with non-games product flying, but discounting mars console sector

THE RISE in the PC sector has contributed strongly to a major increase in the German home software market, but discounting on console titles has eroded video game sales.

According to latest research from the German software association the VUD, in conjunction with GfK, sales in the first three quarters of 1999 reached some Dm 1.97 billion (£628.5m), a 13 per cent increase compared to the first nine months of last year.

During the period, PC games accounted for some Dm960m (£306.4m), whilst console software sales totalled Dm617m (£196.9m). Children's, educational and reference titles, meanwhile, achieved an impressive Dm366m (£116.8m) in revenues.

The growth in the PC market was 13 per cent greater than in the console sector, which increased by just one per cent by value over the same period in 1998. According to the VUD, this was due to price cutting in the video game sector.

Meanwhile, non-games products saw the greatest growth, with some 4.24 million units sold during the period - a 27.8 per cent increase over last year.

The VUD now expects the total home software market to reach some Dm3.5bn (£1.1bn) by the end of the year, a significant increase from the Dm2.9bn (£935m) reported last year.

PC sector is leading the growth in German market

GTI takes DK Down Under

GTI AUSTRALIA has signed up the exclusive distribution rights to the Dorling Kindersley line-up of CD-ROMs in the territory.

The deal takes place with immediate effect and sees GTI supply the well-known titles to both independents and multiples.

"DK has created a global niche in the last decade with our cutting edge interactive learning catalogue," said Dorling Kindersley's commercial director Damon Hurst.

"The retail market place is very important to us. We are delighted that GTI have joined with us to service these customers."

GTI Australia's managing director Julian White added: "We are extremely excited to be working with Dorling Kindersley. The recognition and reputation of their high profile brands within the industry is phenomenal and provides an excellent platform for GTI to partner Dorling Kindersley in their further dominance of the software market."

Acclaim gain

ACCLAIM is looking to raise its profile on the West Coast, with plans to open a new San Francisco office.

The company, which boasts a New York HQ, is looking to build stronger relationships with press specialising in the games market – many of which are based in the California area.

The new base will be used as a publicity office and is being headed up by PR manager Michelle Seebach, who is currently looking for a second employee.

Territory Update

Holland

DREAMCAST

1. Soul Calibur
2. Sonic Adventure
3. Sega Rally 2
4. Ready 2 Rumble
5. Toy Commander

PLAYSTATION

1. Tomorrow Never Dies
2. FIFA 2000
3. Tomb Raider 4
4. Crash Team Racing
5. Final Fantasy VIII

NINTENDO 64

1. Super Smash Bros.
2. Rayman 2
3. Mario Party
4. Nukem: Zero Hour
5. Mario Golf

Source: Virgin Megastores

USA

DREAMCAST

1. NBA 2K
2. NFL 2K
3. Sonic Adventure
4. Ready 2 Rumble
5. Soul Calibur

PLAYSTATION

1. Res. Evil 3: Nemesis
2. Knockout Kings 2000
3. Crash Team Racing
4. T. Hawk's Pro Skater
5. Spyro The Dragon

NINTENDO 64

1. Pokemon Snap
2. Sarge's Heroes
3. Super Smash Bros.
4. Jet Force Gemini
5. Gauntlet Legends

Source: NPD TRSTS

Belgium

DREAMCAST

1. Soul Calibur
2. Worlwide Soccer 2000
3. Sonic Adventure
4. Ready 2 Rumble
5. Sega Rally 2

PLAYSTATION

1. Tomb Raider 4
2. Crash Team Racing
3. Amerzone
4. Tomorrow Never Dies
5. FIFA 2000

NINTENDO

1. Rayman 2
2. Mario Party
3. Star Wars: Racer
4. Nukem: Zero Hour
5. Shadowman

Source: Virgin Megastores

Japan

DREAMCAST

1. Chu-chu Rocket
2. Forbidden Planet
3. Pro Soccer Club
4. Giga Wing
5. Rang Rissor Millenium

PLAYSTATION

1. Chrono Cross
2. Chrono Triger
3. Runabout 2
4. Darby Starion '99
5. Arc Zarad III

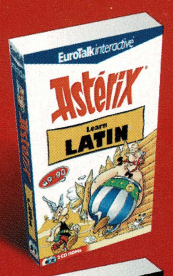
NINTENDO 64

1. Super Robot Battle
2. Super Smash Bros.
3. Pokemon Stadium 2
4. Mario Golf 64
5. Mario Party

Source: Famitsu/64Dream

My, what a large one!

EuroTalk® interactive



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Contact:
Nick DiCesare - sales@gamesdomain.com
Richard Sutcliffe editor - rs@gamesdomain.com

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Games Domain UK is the country's leading online games resource. That's why

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all choose **Games Domain UK** to provide their readers with the best possible games coverage the Internet can offer.

Based on November's traffic through Games Domain UK only.
Sourced from *DART and **ABC.

ENteRtAInMeNt heAvEN....

Newswire

Paragon promotes

The December 2nd edition of Paragon's DVD Review comes with a calendar set within a CD case. The gift is sponsored by Virgin Megastores and is illustrated with 'classic' scenes from DVD releases. Also, the publisher's December 16th edition of Internet Made Easy carries a phone splitter system for dual lines.

Little Noble emerges

Peter Noble PR has created a new 'Junior' division aimed at targeting the children's sector. Headed by Suzanne Noble, the new arm will be handling Warner Video's 'Family Entertainment' range, including the video releases of the Pokemon and South Park movies. It will also oversee Ubi Soft's educational range and the 'Character Group' range of licensed toys and figures.

SPOnG bounces in

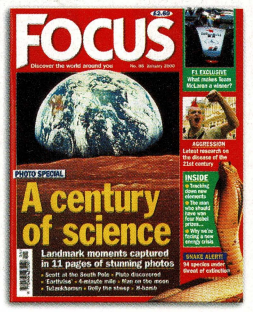
SPOnG, the industry database of all games ever produced, has opened its doors to the public. The website contains information on every video game across every platform, and became widely available on December 1st. The site is an invaluable reference tool. Bookmark www.spong,com now.

Gamespot chases revenue

Gamespot UK is highlighting the flexibility of online sites over magazines. It is offering publishers advertising banners over the festive season, stating that magazines for the same period have long since gone to press.

Media Choice: Focus

Publisher: Gruner-Jahr/UK
Tel: 0171 519 5500
Price: £2.60
Pages: 124
Advertising: 12%



Content: Scientific advances explored and made simple. Sections covering space, technology, nature, human behaviour and history

Features: Making silicon chips, 20th Century showcase, the adaptability of trees, making time capsules

Regulars: Q&A,Technology benchtests, Gizmo round-up, picture specials

Games coverage: Two pages of games reviews alongside sections for the latest books, DVDs and Internet sites

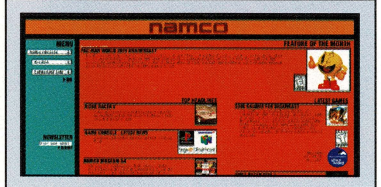
Reviews (out of five): Tutankhamun (4), GTA2 (4), Battlezone II (5), Rally Championship (4), FIFA 2000 (5), Dino Crisis (3)

Average score: 4

Rate Card: Full Page £4,000 DPS £8,000

Editor: Nick Smith
Advertising Manager: Glenda Marchant

Sitewatch



Namco www.namco.com

With the superb Soul Calibur under its belt, Namco has thrust itself back in the gaming spotlight. This well executed site offers total coverage of Namco's games across all supported systems. It is also the first place to see news from the Japanese giant - most recently the announcement that its Museum Collection franchise is headed for N64. A bright and worthwhile site.

Rating 4/5

Up Close & Personal: Martin Bramall, Specialist Press PR Manager, Infogrames

What was your first job in the industry?
PR executive for Gremlin Interactive.

Most important lesson learned?
Life is not a rehearsal.

Happy memories of the Gremlin era?
Yeah. It had good people, working hard and having a good time doing it. An 'all in it together' kind of vibe, know what I mean? It was beautiful, man.

Funniest moments?
Miles Guttery on the same pitch as Kevin Keegan is an image I'll never forget. E3 this year was hilarious from start to finish.

And now the move to Infogrames. What do you do exactly?
Secure as much editorial coverage as possible within the PC games press.

Best thing about the job?
The constant flow of quality games to work with. Being back in Manchester - and near the Mecca that is Old Trafford.

Ah yes, you're an ardent Man Utd fan. Why? You don't even live in London...
That's really very funny. No, really it is. There's just something about Man Utd. A mate of mine had a fantasy of playing for them at Old Trafford. It's a full house at the end of a match. Remi Moses crosses and he volleys the winner, runs back and makes love to Judy Finnegan in the centre circle. They have that effect. My fantasy involves Richard Madeley, though...

Erm... Okay... Predictions for 2000?
God will release a patch to fix the ozone layer and we'll all live happily ever after. Roy Keane will be unveiled as Christ...

We've had a fantastic 12 months

Thanks to all MCV readers who have helped make 1999 our best ever year

Together the millennium will be even brighter

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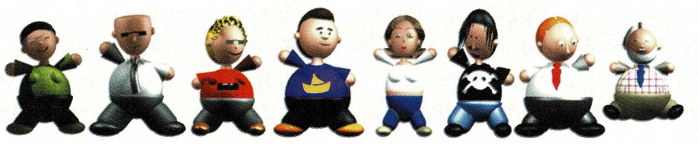


see you all at milia

www.userv.com

High

HERE'S TO E-COMMERCE: The Gameplay.com team, built out of BT's WIreplay and a traditional mail order outfit in Leeds, moved into plush central London offices last month and is driving on with its initial promise to "do an Amazon" in the games market by dominating online sales of entertainment software across Europe

LARGE CHUNKS of the industry have been keen to talk to or about Gameplay for quite a few months now. Publishers have been busy negotiating terms and establishing accounts, all the while trying to get a feel for just how important this most high-profile games-dedicated e-tailer might become.

The City scuttlebutt has been consistently positive, evidenced by its summer flotation on the AIM being so over-subscribed that the firm ended up raising £10m more than the £21m expected.

The nose-tappers, meanwhile, continue to chatter about the Next Big Thing, calling on reams of research about an inevitable consumer drift towards online shopping, with games at the virtual vanguard, to back their argument (seven million homes in the UK now use the Internet and a recent Jupiter Communications report predicted 9.4 per cent of all games being sold online by 2003).

Its 'never beaten on price promise' (made possible by the absence of the sort of physical and personnel overheads incurred by bricks and mortar chains) has seen it cited in the industry's on-going pricing/margins argument.

Even High Street rivals find Gameplay an irresistible topic. The CEO of a major chain recently let rip an almighty (and decidedly off the record) rant about how the fledgling firm would be a flash in the pan and why publishers were fools to take them so seriously.

"Well," smiles Gameplay's chairman Mark Strachan, "at least they are talking about us."

Then, last week, the constant buzz was abruptly punctuated by a mighty big shout from the rooftops, as BSkyB took a 10 per cent stake in the firm.

Those pin-stripe sorts in the City were certainly impressed, with Gameplay's share price soaring nearly 50 per cent, up to £3.77 in an hour - giving the company a staggering market cap of over £150m

Murdoch's money isn't, of course, a cast iron guarantee of success (this, after all, is a firm that's recently bought a similarly-sized slice in Manchester City) but it does highlight two things: big business' growing conviction that it needs interests in the Net to survive; and Gameplay's status as the UK games market's biggest player in the e-commerce sector.

> ***"EB, Dixons and the others must kill their businesses in order to fully participate online. It's a dilemma, particularly for EB, as it has just spent £60m on more shops."*** Mark Strachan, Chairman, Gameplay

Gameplay is Strachan's baby, conceived of an unlikely marriage between Leeds-based mail order outfit ICE (Interactive Commercial Enterprises) and BT's pioneering but ultimately under-achieving online gaming division Wireplay.

Strachan set up Gameplay.com to combine the two firm's online expertise (Wireplay) and physical fulfilment capability (ICE).

"ICE is a terrific business that's been nicely profitable for the five years since it started. But, perhaps most importantly to us, there is also a commitment to next day delivery that actually permeates the whole company.

"We don't want to be associated with any of this quite ridiculous 'please allow 28 days for delivery' nonsense that so many existing online retailers make consumers put up with."

Gameplay also eschews the "weasel tactics" of bumping up prices by charging for postage and packing. Delivery is fast and free.

Wireplay's charms are less obvious, at least to an e-commerce company. It is essentially a Net-based communication technology company designed to provide multi-player gaming facilities. At the time of its sale to Gameplay it had attracted 100,000 users to whom it was offering 110 titles.

Wireplay helps give Gameplay an edge. It's a component that makes the difference between 'ICE Online' and a very different kind of outfit that offers a compelling and layered environment. One in which you just happen to be able to buy games.

And Colin Duffy, the man who ran Wireplay for BT and made the move to Gameplay when the

Street Hijacker

gameplay.com
we're never beaten

Until recently, online retail hardly featured on this industry's radar. Which was bonkers really, given that people who have Internet access tend to own computers and people who own computers tend to buy software. So Mark Strachan and Mark Bernstein put a plan together, took it to the City and have proceeded to scare the life out of bricks and mortar retailers ever since. Dave Roberts reports on the rise of Gameplay…

division was sold, is very quick to dismiss any rude suggestions that Wireplay is the poor relation in this new family.

"Wireplay plays an important part in Gameplay's main aim, which is to build a huge and loyal customer base. It builds a sense of community and gives a certain type of gamer a reason to stay in touch with the Gameplay site."

Strachan continues: "Wireplay also means we're perfectly positioned to take advantage of the new ADSL technology when games can be downloaded directly to a PC - or whatever."

What Wireplay has become, then, is a value-adding adjunct to the core business of Gameplay, a way of attracting and retaining a certain type of customer.

A different consumer will be more interested in what Strachan calls the 'soft' content of online quiz firm Internet Digital Media (now there's a name created by a random buzzword generator).

Gameplay acquired IDM for £8.5m last month in anticipation of a move towards a mainstream audience. As its customer base broadens, the ability to implement targeted 'permission-based' marketing will become crucial.

Duffy explains: "The customer's no longer just important, he is genuinely powerful.

"We can only talk to him and market to him if he lets us, so whilst we can know a lot about him through his history with us plus things like where he comes from when he comes to us and where he goes to afterwards, we have to use that information very carefully and make sure we don't bombard him with stuff he's not interested in or he'll switch off."

It's the difference between a blunderbuss and a precision rifle - and Strachan believes that only dedicated online companies will take full advantage.

"EB, Dixons and others have to kill their own businesses to some extent, in order to participate fully online. And that's a dilemma for them, particularly EB, which has just persuaded its shareholders to cough up £60m for Game, a chain of High Street shops."

He knows most of the major chains are making moves towards the web, but is convinced that it generally falls into the Any Other Business section of their agendas.

The leading High Street multiples, meanwhile, could argue that the amount of resources they are currently putting into online reflect the sector's current significance, that they are laying foundations for rather more substantial structures to be built close to the arrival of genuine mass market demand.

They might even point to Gameplay's own financials to back up their argument. In the current fiscal year ending July 2000, some 98 per cent of all revenues will come through software sales as opposed to online gaming charges. 90 per cent of those sales will be made through traditional phone sales, leaving probably less than £2m worth of revenues to be generated via the .com end of the business.

It's not a significant amount, but, at this stage, Gameplay is being judged on its infrastructure, its people, its plans and its potential - and the verdict is almost unanimously positive.

Growing Up In Public

Since the spring, it's been a rather busy nine months for Gameplay....

March: Gameplay incorporated. A vehicle for acquisitions, it plans to be a games-only e-tailer.

July: Gameplay acquires mail-order outfit ICE for £5.1m (rising to £8.1m dependant on targets being met) and BT's Wireplay for £5.5m. The deals are funded by a flotation on the AIM, raising £31m. Initial share price is 135p.

September: Gameplay.com goes live, with over 2,000 products available from day one.

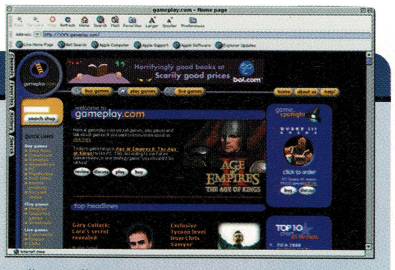
October: Ex-Sega man Andy Mee appointed as marketing director. Huge Xmas ad blitz kicks off.

November 17th: Gameplay buys International Digital Media, the firm behind online quiz network doUno, for £6.7m potentially rising to £8.5m.

November 22nd: Gameplay partners with digital TV broadcaster Open, part-owned by BSkyB, and begins running rolling half-hour show (updated weekly) offering consumers the chance to buy product via their remote control (80 titles listed).

November 25th: Website relaunched, with many increased features alongside selling function.

December 8th: Gameplay ties up deals with



online trading site BT Spree and shopping portal myTAXI.com. This follows agreements with Games Domain, LineOne, Future, Asda and HEAT.net.

December 9th: BSkyB takes a 10 per cent stake and Gameplay's share price leaps by nearly 50 per cent within an hour of the news. The company's market cap soars past that of leading High Street retailer Electronics Boutique.

Abingdon indie says farewell

I AM WRITING to say goodbye to this industry. After 12 years, my partner Pauline and I have had enough. I set up Computer Run as a gamble after coming out of a secure but getting-boring career in the RAF. I risked everything including our savings and house to get it going.

I experienced ups and downs in my self-employed history as a retailer, met many people, had some nice trips abroad. But do you know what? I would trade all that in if we as indies could play on the same level as multiples.

I for one know that we could kick ass if we were given the same level of support, the same discount structure, the same sale or return policies, the same backhanders and the same marketing and advertising support that multiples get.

But no. We, like all other indies, have had to do it all out of our mark-up, small that it is.

Could staff discounts at the major multiples and supermarkets be adding to the squeeze on indie sales?

I see with interest that publishers are starting to be the whingers now, something indies have been accused of in the past. They claim that it is not fair that multiples are the tail wagging the dog and squeezing them dry.

Well, I have no sympathy. If they had kept the independents thriving, they could have told the multiples where to get off, and supplied the trade in general at price points to suits them.

If multiples did not like it, they could be told where they could stick it, as a route to the end user would still be open via the indies.

I have one other thought that I have not seen voiced before, and that is the number of people in employment at the multiples, especially the supermarkets. As they become more dominant and diversify more and employ more and more staff, what happens to your customers?

I for one have noticed the growing trend that at least one person in a family works for a national retailer and what does that person get? The answer is staff discount. So what happens? Everybody in that family, as well as friends get that staff member to buy all the Christmas and birthday presents at a discount. End result? They don't come to you any more.

Anyway I am not bitter. Maybe a little twisted, but not bitter. I have valued my time as an independent retailer (and many thanks to Clive Bishop for not letting me do work experience with you all that time ago, it spurred me on no end).

A big thank you to everyone who has ever helped me over the years, but especially to my wife Pauline, who has been a tower of strength.

Stephen Palmer
Computer Run, Abingdon

Focus Winners

MILLENNIUM countdown

MCV tied up with Focus Multimedia earlier this year in support of its Millennium Countdown promo for indies. Running through the last three months of 1999, each store ordering 20 units or more is entered into a draw for top prizes. Our very own George Kotsiofides picks the winners.

November Winners:

First Prize: The Computer Store, Carmarthen, wins two tickets for flights on Concorde.

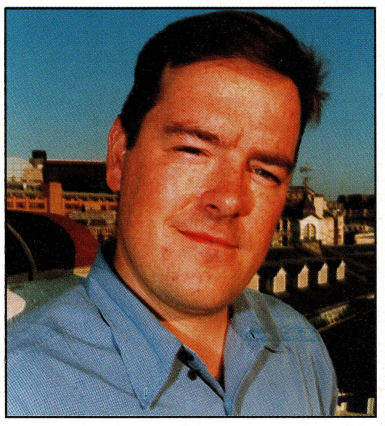
Second Prize: Aztec Computers, Newport, wins two tickets for hot air ballooning.

Third Prize: Trago Mills, Liskeard, wins a Harrods Millennium hamper.

There were also 25 runner-up prizes of £50 of free Focus software. For details call Focus on *01889 570156.*

Studios must think ahead

I HAVE TO SAY that I simply could not agree more with last Friday's Codewarrior article by your columnist Owain Bennallack *('Retail RIP' - MCV 10/12).*



McGOVERN: Ready for the online gaming generation

It argued that smart developers need to think about not only how to deliver online gameplay, but also how to deliver games directly into households.

And that is why our teams here at HotGen Studios concentrate not only on games for all the current consoles, but are also developing for the next-generation platforms, massively persistent online gaming and wireless application devices linked to mobile phones and Internet-related devices.

Fergus McGovern,
HotGen Studios, Croydon

Welcome to reality, EB

I DON'T THINK I've been this happy for ages. So poor Electronics Boutique has suddenly realised that selling games for less than £30 means no profit for them *('EB pays price of PSX cuts' - MCV 26/11)*

Us little independents have known this for some time. They now find that because they don't sell hi-fis, TVs or anything else to make a profit with, they can't really afford to sell these games so cheaply to their customers.

John Steinbrecher says he's going to the publishers to discuss trade prices. Let's hope he can encourage the publishers to drop their prices, so that the rest of us get some lower prices too.

I have stuck to selling most titles at £34.99 and haven't really noticed any real drop in sales.

However, because of the situation with piracy, I wasn't selling much anyway.

David Funnell
Consoles, Kirkcaldy

Forward Planner

Nearly there. There is one more print issue of MCV to come before Christmas. We then take a two-week break from print editions, but the gap will be filled by special editions of the MCV Online Newsflash...

Issue 67	Friday December 24th	**Special Christmas Double-Issue**
MCV online	Friday December 31st	**MCV Online Newsflash: Extended Edition**
	Friday January 7th	**MCV Online Newsflash: Extended Edition**

MCV will not be publishing its print edition for two weeks over the Christmas period, but an extended MCV Online Newsflash will be available to all of our 9,000+ readers on Friday December 31st and Friday January 7th. To register for this FREE service and to ensure that you are kept up to date with all the breaking news during the Christmas period, email Lisa Foster now on Lisa.Foster@mcvuk.com

Issue 68 Friday January 14th **Year 2000 Industry Outlook**
No relaunch or new size is needed for us. The indisputed market leader (even our rival would seem to agree) returns with an info-packed issue mapping out the year ahead.

Advertising ☎ **01992 535647**

Editorial ☎ **01992 535646**

Griffiths and White to launch own agencies

High profile PR duo leave Fox and Take 2 for own ventures, Stolar takes new role, HMV completes buying re-organisation...

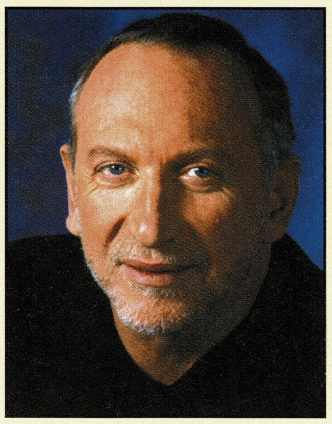
Fox Interactive's popular PR manager **ANDREA GRIFFITHS** has resigned. She leaves the EA affiliate label on December 21st to spend time in her native Australia. She was previously PR manager for the EA range of products and has spent five years at the firm's Langley base. Griffiths will return to the UK in March whereupon she plans to establish her own public relations consultancy.

Following the recent arrival of **ROD COBAIN** from Digital Integration as sales director, City-placed games firm On-line has now added **KEVIN HASSALL** to the team. The developer and publisher is working on a youth-orientated football management game called Giant Killers, with the ex-Canal + Multimedia producer joining as development manager. Hassall will also oversee the production of a PC racing title, Extreme Bike Trials.

Eastleigh-based developer IO Productions has appointed **DUNCAN WILSON** as senior designer. Duncan joins after leaving his art director role at rival studio Workhouse.

HMV has rejigged its games buying department. **MARTYN GIBBS** will join the chain in January as head of games after a successful period heading up WH Smith's games department. **JAMES COOKE** has resigned his position as games manager, with **DOUG BONE** completing the shuffle with a promotion from console buyer to games product controller. Gibbs will report directly to the chain's music and games product manager **TREVOR JOHNSON**. Other recent changes have seen **PETE GORDON** become CD-ROM product buyer, following the switch by **DARREN NEWNHAM** to become games buyer for HMV's successful online retail division.

GAVIN WHITE has left his position as product manager for Take 2 Interactive. White recently completed highly successful work on the publisher's Grand Theft Auto 2 and will be setting up his own PR agency in the New Year. Watch this space for more information on the new company.



BERNIE STOLAR, the former Sega of America president and a veteran of the US video games industry, has joined HMG Worldwide's Board of directors. Stolar left Sega shortly before the Dreamcast's US launch and joins the merchandise design outfit as it prepares to integrate its retail and e-commerce aspects.

If you would like your company's appointments featured within our Industry Appointments page, simply email your details to **Lisa.Foster@mcvuk.com**. Alternatively, fax us on **01992 535648** or telephone the MCV Newsdesk directly with your information on **01992 535646**. Photos are particularly welcome.

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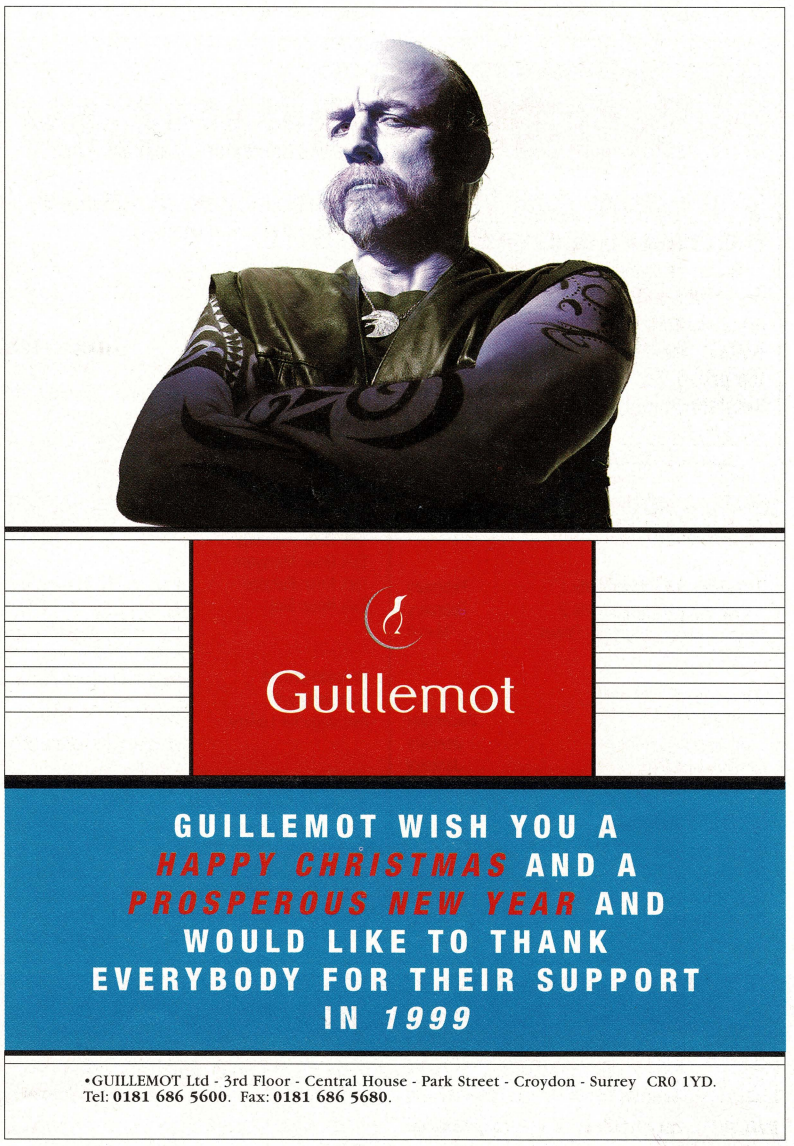
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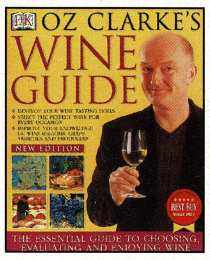
Another varied selection of non-games products comes under the spotlight this week. These include a wine guide from Dorling Kindersley, a maths tutorial from Sherston Software, the latest Wallace & Gromit CD-ROM and new football reference titles...

Oz Clarke's Wine Guide

Available: **Out Now**
Supplier: **Dorling Kindersley**
Tel: **0171 969 8488**
Price: **£19.99**



SECOND only to MCV's sales director, Oz Clarke is recognised internationally as a leading wine expert. And in this latest CD-ROM from Dorling Kindersley, he gives consumers the opportunity to share his knowledge.

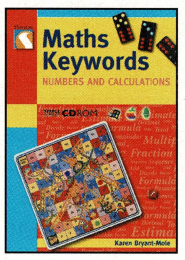
The disc covers five main sections: The Wine Encyclopaedia, Wine Tasting, All About Wine, World Atlas of Wine and Matching Food and Wine.

Some 54 videos, 1,200 wine to 600 food matches, 35,000 vintage recommendations, 57 maps and a glossary with 3,000 entries are included, whilst Clarke provides accessible, no-nonsense advice.

Alex Jarvis has already ordered her own personal copy.

Maths Keywords

Available: **Out Now**
Supplier: **Sherston Software**
Tel: **01666 843200**
Price: **£29.95**



FROM one of the leaders in pure educational software packages comes this latest maths tutorial CD-ROM.

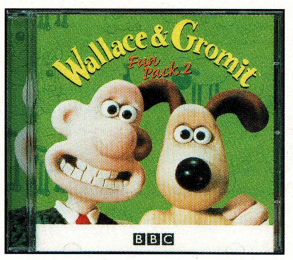
Maths Keywords: Numbers and Calculations explores the language of numbers, the number system and looks at how calculations actually work. All of the keywords are relevant to the National Numeracy Strategy and are cross-referenced with other words.

Suitable for children aged 7-11, the software is child-friendly with colour coded icons and narrated 'help' available on every screen.

As well as helping children to understand essential maths vocabulary, it also teaches them information retrieval skills.

Wallace & Gromit Pack 2

Available: **Out Now**
Supplier: **BBC Multimedia**
Tel: **0181 576 3592**
Price: **£19.99**



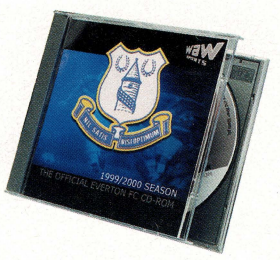
THE PLASTICINE heroes return in their fourth CD-ROM outing.

Also celebrating their 10th anniversary, the Wallace & Gromit Fun Pack 2 features a number of new screensavers, a selection of video clips, plus a program giving users the opportunity to customise their desktops with W&G wallpapers, sounds, icons and animated cursors.

Three games are featured. Wallace's Cheese Board Game takes a board game format; The Great Train Game is based on the train sequence from The Wrong Trousers animated film; Feathers and the Diamond gives the user the chance to help Feathers steal the diamond. Cracking.

WAW Sports Soccer CDs

Available: **Out Now**
Supplier: **Where and When Sports**
Tel: **0870 241 1754**
Price: **£29.99**



PERFECT for football fanatics, these new CD-ROMs focus on individual clubs, giving supporters everything they need to know about their teams.

At present, the CD-ROMs are available for Everton and Newcastle United only. Features include updateable results and fixtures, a desktop countdown clock to the next Big Game and an interactive video tour of the home ground. There's also specially filmed 'behind the scenes' footage of players and coaching staff. In addition, users with Internet connection can receive updates from the WAW Sports website.

Expect more offerings based on Premiership Clubs soon.

Release planner

An at-a-glance guide to new education, reference, lifestyle and utility PC titles on their way to retail...

BBC Multimedia
☎ **0181 222 1571**

Teletubbies (PlayStation)	February 3rd
Noddy (GBC)	February 17th

BTL Publishing
☎ **01274 841373**

AA A to B 2000 Journey Planner	January
Easy Tutor Learn Internet Now	January
Easy Tutor Learn Lotus Smartsuite	January

Computer Bookshops
☎ **0121 778 3333**

Encyclopedia for Smart Kids 1	February
Encyclopedia for Smart Kids 2	February
Rome: Crime, Passion and Power	March

Data Becker
☎ **01420 22707**

Tattoo Maker	December
Copy Station	January
3D Shop Designer	January
Invitation Maker	January

Dorling Kindersley
☎ **0171 836 5411**

The Wiggles	February
Test for Success Age 11	March
Three Little Pigs	March

Europress
☎ **01625 855000**

Number Crew 1	January 28th
Number Crew 2	January 28th
Maths Key Stage 2	February 4th
A-Level Revision Maths	February 4th

EuroTalk
☎ **0171 371 7711**

Talk Now: Gujurati	January
Talk Now: Hindi	January
Talk Now: Kannada	January
Talk Now: Malayam	January
Talk Now: Punjabi	January
Talk Now: Sini	January

Focus Multimedia
☎ **01889 570156**

Tutankhamun	January
Astrology for Lovers	February

Sherston Software
☎ **01666 843200**

Teacher's Cupboard 2000	December 10th
The Spelling Show	December 10th
Number Train	January 4th
Science Keywords Material World	January 4th
Oxford Literacy Web - Sound Activities	February 1st
Oxford Literacy Web - The Big ABC	February 1st
Oxford Reading Tree Stage 5	February 20th

SouthPeak Interactive
☎ **0171 3729762**

Scooby Doo: Fun Park Phantom	December
Animaniacs Splatball	December

The Learning Company
☎ **01293 651300**

Babyz	December
Creatures Adventures	December
Comptons Encyclopedia 2000	December
Rugrats Mystery Adventures	December
Nick-O-Matic Design Factory	December
Bugs Bunny Goes Wild in the West	December
Taz and Tweety's Funny Farm	December
Reader Rabbit Playtime for Baby	December
Catz 4	December
Dogz 4	December
Grolier Encyclopedia 2000	December
Barbie Ocean Discovery	December

Tivola
☎ **0208 255 2442**

Max on the Moon	February
Oscar Drops into the Countryside	February

Ubi Soft
☎ **0181 944 9000**

Playmobil - Hype the Time Quest	November
Playmobil - Alex Builds His Farm	November

To ensure your company's inclusion in this invaluable retail guide to software products arriving outside the mainstream games area, send information and materials directly to **Matt Camp, MCV Media UK, St. Andrew House, 46-48 St. Andrew Street, Hertford, Herts SG14 1JA.** Tel: **01992 535646** Or email details to **Matt.Camp@mcvuk.com.**

CHILDREN'S TOP 25

1.	Thomas the Tank & Friends	Hasbro
2.	Action Man	Hasbro
3.	Barbie Sleeping Beauty	Mattel Media
4.	Lego Loco	Lego Media
5.	Sabrina Teenage Witch	Havas
6.	Lego Rock Raiders	Lego Media
7.	Sabrina Brat Attack	Havas
8.	Simpsons Cartoon Studio	Fox Int.
9.	Tarzan Activity Centre	Disney
10.	Barbie Riding Club	Mattel Media
11.	Barbie Ocean Discovery	Mattel
12.	Lego Creator	Lego Media
13.	Rugrats Adventure	TLC
14.	Magic Artist Studio	Disney
15.	Adventures in Furbyland	Hasbro
16.	TOTP Mix Factory 2	BBC
17.	Barbie Hair Style	Mattel Media
18.	Teletubbies Fav. Games	BBC
19.	Tonka Workshop	Hasbro
20.	Barbie Photo Designer	Mattel Media
21.	Pingu & Friends	BBC
22.	Tonka Construction Kit	Hasbro
23.	My Little Pony	Hasbro
24.	Rugrats Activity Challenge	TLC
25.	In Grandma's Attic	TLC

Source ELSPA/ChartTrack, November sales

The Associates Just Flight
TORA, TORA, TORA...
A Total Enhancement for Microsoft® Combat Flight Simulator
PROBABLY THE WORLD'S BIGGEST DEDICATED FLIGHT SIMULATOR PUBLISHER
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Just Flight
Pacific Combat Pilot
Exclusive UK Sales Tel: 01279 822822

HARDWARE

The hardware world never stands still. In time for Xmas, MCV examines products from TEAC, Sitecom and Spectravideo...

DV-25E DVD Drive

Available: **Out now**
Supplier: **TEAC**
Telephone: **0208 498 2100**
Price: **£155+Vat**

THIS NEW DVD drive from hardware specialists TEAC has been designed to slot into laptop computers.

The overall height of the unit is therefore only 12.7mm taking up no more space than a standard CD-ROM Drive.

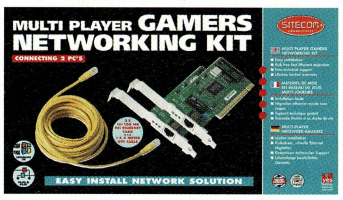
The DVD drive supports all common formats including DVD-ROM, DVD- Video, CD-DA, CD-ROM, CD-I, Video CD and CD Extra. The drive won't play back DVD films without a decoder though.

Crucially for a laptop device the unit consumes very little power, enabling prolonged use.

Dinky and undeniably cool.

Gamers Networking Kit

Available: **This month**
Supplier: **Sitecom (Dragonfly)**
Telephone: **0118 989 3959**
Price: **£34.99**



NETWORK GAMING has long been the proviso of the specialist PC mags and office employees with an understanding boss. Only a few 'ordinary' consumers could lay claim to owning a home built network.

Sitecom's Multi Player gamers net-working kit provides two full duplex PCI Ethernet cards and an eight metre long UTP cable to connect two PCs together. The cards are installed into PCs and connected via the cable for those all-night sessions of Quake III.

Bigger networks can be created using a Hub.

Great value. And for an extra fiver, you get a racing game too.

ScrollMouse USB

Available:**This month**
Supplier: **Spectravideo**
Telephone: **0208 902 2211**
Price: **£15.99**

THIS NEW MOUSE from Logic 3 includes a variety of good features for a top price.

The unit features three buttons, with the middle one acting as a scroll wheel. Full compatibility with all Microsoft 'Intellimouse' software allows for easy navigation through documents in Windows, scrolling through text in Word for example.

The wheel also has gaming applications. It's certainly MCV's preferred method of changing all those weapons in Half Life: Opposing Force.

PS2 and USB versions available.

Logic 3 TopDrive Podium

Available: **This month**
Supplier: **Spectravideo**
Telephone: **0208 902 2211**
Price: **£16.99**

SPECTRAVIDEO recently introduced this cutting edge bit of hardware to retail as the TopDrive Podium. The more astute among MCV's readers will recognise it as a tiny table.

Its purpose is to provide a platform for all those console steering wheels to sit on when no regular table is available. The unit is then placed between a users legs. Comfy.

Spectravideo suggests that the unit can also handle TV dinners. Though the possible consequences would probably be too messy for most to consider...

If you would like your hardware products featured on this page, contact **George Kotsiofides** on 01992 535646. Please note that we require a visual and full marketing information.

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Great game, fantastic graphics, shame about the sound, but not any more thanks to the ScreenBeat SOUND STATION – get the sound quality of a £500 TV from your portable. The new ScreenBeat SOUND STATION 300 watts of pure sound quality. Blow your mind with the stylish acoustically engineered speaker system. Hear the difference as the sub-woofer thumps out the sound of the engine as you rev the game to the limit. Listen to the world in 'wrap around' sound from the twin satellite speakers. The ScreenBeat SOUND STATION is the must have audio add on for the serious games player, compatible with Sony PlayStation, Sega Dreamcast and multimedia PC's. This top range speaker system can also be used on your personal cassette, portable CD and MP3 player, to give you a true stereo system sound quality anywhere you want.
Logic 3
SpectraVideo plc (UK)
33 Northfield Industrial Estate,
Beresford Avenue, Wembley,
Middlesex, HAO INW, U.K.
TEL: 020 8902 2211 FAX: 020 8903 6625
WEB: www.spectravideo.com
SPECTRA VIDEO
All trademarks or trade names are the registered property of their respective companies. Logic 3 is a registered trademark of Logic 3 International Ltd.

ORDER TIPS: HANDHELD SPECIAL

MCV probes the world of the handheld consoles, taking a look at the present and future of this expanding market. We all know about Pokemon and Pac Man, but next year will see portable versions of Resident Evil, Metal Gear Solid and Sonic...

Resident Evil

GENERAL INFORMATION

Game Boy Colour

Genre: Action
Developer: Capcom/Hotgen
Publisher: Virgin
Street date: February 2000
Estimated street price: £24.99

PRODUCT INFORMATION — 1 player

We can't wait for this one! Every detail of the original PlayStation game has been crammed into the Game Boy release - apart from the FMV intro. Chris Redfield and Jill Valentine are controllable as players explore the spooky mansion.

15+ FP

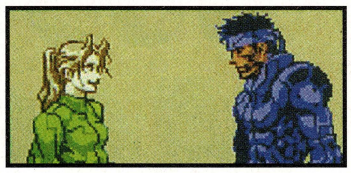
MARKETING SUPPORT

Misc. Full scale marketing campaign expected with emphasis on the title as a style accessory

P.O.S. Some POS material will be available

SALES POTENTIAL

The scariest game available on any portable and a technical marvel. A monster hit for retail.



Metal Gear Solid: Ghost Babel

GENERAL INFORMATION

Game Boy Colour

Genre: Action
Developer: Konami
Publisher: Konami
Street date: May 2000
Estimated street price: £24.99

PRODUCT INFORMATION — 1 player

Ghost Babel's action may be viewed from above but the game mechanics - stealth, cool weapons, and a cinematic storyline - remain. Snake faces a new foe, the Black Chamber group, and 180 VR missions. Sneaky.

15+ FP

MARKETING SUPPORT

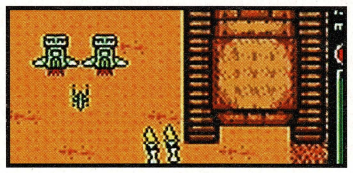
Print Specialist and trade press ads expected

Misc. Heavyweight marketing campaign

P.O.S. Posters, flyers, standees

SALES POTENTIAL

If you're stocking Game Boy then you must stock this. Brand recognition will ensure massive sales on the format.



Star Wars: Episode 1: Racer

GENERAL INFORMATION

Game Boy Colour

Genre: Racing
Developer: LucasArts
Publisher: Nintendo
Street date: December 17
Estimated street price: £24.99

PRODUCT INFORMATION — 2 players

The second rumble cartridge for the Big N's veteran system is clothed in Star Wars splendour. Races are one on one featuring the characters and pods from the N64 version, albeit in a top down style. Very very fast.

3+ FP

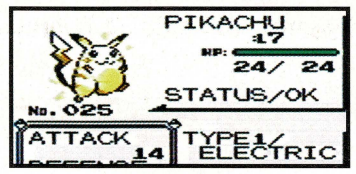
MARKETING SUPPORT

Misc. Some marketing activity expected encompassing Game Boy as a whole

P.O.S. Dummy boxes and flyers available

SALES POTENTIAL

Won't reach the dizzy heights of Pokemon but should still do well on the format this Christmas.



Pokemon Blue and Red

GENERAL INFORMATION

Game Boy Colour

Genre: Action
Developer: Nintendo
Publisher: Nintendo
Street date: Out now
Street price: £24.99

PRODUCT INFORMATION — 2 players

Both incarnations of the quirky collect/breed 'em-up have been in the All Formats top 10 chart since launch over two months ago. A phenomenon that has suprised many. Features simple yet compulsive gameplay.

15+

MARKETING SUPPORT

Print National cinema advertising campaign with Disney's Tarzan

Misc. National TV four-week campaign from October 1st on terrestrial and satellite channels

P.O.S. Standees, posters and banners, FSDUs and window stickers

SALES POTENTIAL

Has already proved itself as a top seller for Nintendo. Will continue its success as new Pokemon products are released.

Sonic Pocket Adventure

GENERAL INFORMATION

Neo Geo Pocket

Genre: Action
Developer: Sega
Publisher: SNK
Street date: Q1 2000
Estimated street price: £29.99

PRODUCT INFORMATION — 2 players

The spikey blue one returns in pocket form. And what a comeback. Borrowing heavily from the Mega Drive's Sonic 2, the game retains the speed associated with the character as well as a link up two player mode. Excellent visuals too.

3+ FP

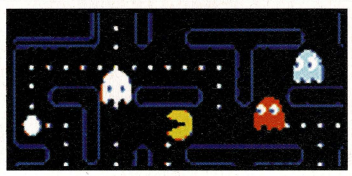
MARKETING SUPPORT

Misc. A product specific marketing campaign will back the game

P.O.S. Some materials expected

SALES POTENTIAL

A top quality title that will sell well - and the kind of high profile release the format needs. A must stock item.



PacMan

GENERAL INFORMATION

Neo Geo Pocket

Genre: Arcade
Developer: Namco
Publisher: SNK
Street date: Out now
Street price: £24.99

PRODUCT INFORMATION — 1 player

Recently named the game of the century, PacMan is a true classic. The NGPC version is as close to arcade perfect as you can get and includes options for full screen or scrolling action.

3+ FP

MARKETING SUPPORT

P.O.S. Prominently displayed on the new demo pods at retail

SALES POTENTIAL

You can't go far wrong with Pac Man. Stock it and the longevity of the title will ensure continued sales.

MCV Hotlist

Get your pre-orders confirmed for these hot titles...

DREAMCAST

Sega Bass Fishing	Sports	Sega	0181 995 3399	Gem	**January 2000**
Virtua Striker 2	Sports	Sega	0181 995 3399	Gem	**January 21st**
Re-Volt	Racing	Acclaim	0171 344 5000	Open	**January 29th**
Resident Evil 2	Action	Virgin	0171 551 0000	Centresoft	**January 28th**
Crazy Taxi	Sports	Sega	0181 995 3399	Gem	**February 18th**

PLAYSTATION

Ace Combat 3	Action	SCEE	01895 456700	Centresoft	**January 2000**
Urban Chaos	Action	Eidos	0181 636 3000	Centresoft	**January 2000**
Gran Turismo 2	Racing	SCEE	01895 456700	Centresoft	**January 2000**
ISS Evolution	Sports	Konami	01895 470500	Open	**February 2000**

NINTENDO 64

Xena: Warrior Princess	Action	Titus	0171 551 0000	Virgin	**December 17th**
Castlevania 2	Action	Konami	01895 470500	Open	**February 2000**
Armorines	Action	Acclaim	0171 344 5000	Open	**December 24th**
Perfect Dark	Action	Nintendo	01703 653377	THE Games	**April 2000**

PC

Quake III	Action	Activision	01895 456700	Centresoft	**December 17th**
Le Mans 24 Hour	Racing	Infogrames	0161 827 8000	Centresoft	**January 2000**
Messiah	Action	Virgin	0171 551 0000	Centresoft	**January 7th**
Battlezone II	Action	Activision	01895 456700	Centresoft	**January 7th**

GAME BOY

Star Wars Racers	Racing	Nintendo	01703 653377	THE Games	**December 17th**
Armorines	Action	Acclaim	0171 344 5000	Open	**December 24th**
Resident Evil	Action	Virgin	0171 551 0000	Centresoft	**February 2000**

Key to our weekly product guide

- 3+ — Indicates that MCV considers the product particularly suitable for in-store display.
- 18+ — MCV's predicted voluntary or BBFC rating.
- L — Indicates that the game has a licence attached to it. The arrow points upwards if the licence adds value at retail, down if not.
- FP — FP indicates a full-price release, BC is a back-catalogue title. ED indicates expansion disc.

PLANET DISTRIBUTION

TEL.01992 707 400 | The largest distributor of multi-format leisure products in the UK | TEL.01992 707 400

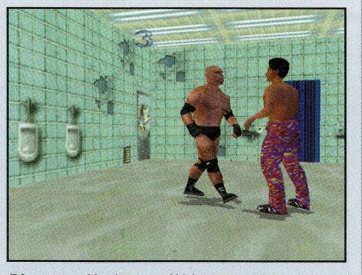
Merry Mayhem this Xmas

It seems that only EA is brave enough to release anything the day before Christmas. The main event will be WCW Mayhem on the N64. But will the big men in leotards be enough?...

	TITLE	FORMAT	GENRE	PUBLISHER	TELEPHONE	DISTRIBUTOR	RELEASE DATE	DEVELOPER
XMAS EVE	NBA Live 2000	N64	Sports	EA	01753 549442	Pinnacle	December 24th	EA Sports
	Supercross	PSX	Racing	EA	01753 549442	Pinnacle	December 24th	EA Sports
	Ultima Ascension	PC	RPG	EA	01753 549442	Pinnacle	December 24th	Origin
	WCW Mayhem 64	N64	Fighting	EA	01753 549442	Pinnacle	December 24th	EA Sports
FROM 7TH JANUARY	3Sixty	GBC	Racing	Cryo UK	01926 325552	Centresoft	January 7th	Smart Dog
	Jimmy White's 2	PSX	Sports	Virgin Interactive	0171 551 0000	Centresoft	January 7th	Awesome Studios
	Messiah	PC	Action	Interplay	0171 551 0000	Centresoft	January 7th	Shiny
	Planescape Torment	PC	RPG	Interplay	0171 551 0000	Centresoft	January 7th	Black Isle
	Renegade Racers	PSX/PC	Racing	Interplay	0171 551 0000	Centresoft	January 7th	Virgin
	Street Fighter Alpha	GBC	Fighting	Virgin Interactive	0171 551 0000	Centresoft	January 7th	Crawfish
	Vigilante 8: 2nd Offence	DC/PSX	Driving	Activision	01895 456700	Centresoft	January 7th	Activision
	Armada	DC	Action	Acclaim	0171 344 5000	Open	January 14th	Acclaim Studios
	Armorines	GBC	Action	Acclaim	0171 344 5000	Open	January 14th	Acclaim Studios
	Discworld Noir	PSX	Action	GT Interactive	020 8222 9700	Open	January 14th	Perfect
	NBA Jam 2000	N64	Action	Acclaim	0171 344 5000	Open	January 14th	Acclaim Studios
	Thrasher	PSX	Sports	Take 2	01753 854444	Jack of all Games	January 14th	Z-Axis
	Age of Wonder	PC	Strategy	Take 2	01753 854444	Jack of all Games	January 21st	Epic Games
	Airport Inc	PC	Strategy	Take 2	01753 854444	Jack of all Games	January 21st	Krysalis
	Daffy Duck Fowl Play	GBC	Action	Infogrames	0161 827 8000	Centresoft	January 21st	Infogrames
	Marvel Vs. Capcom	PSX	Fighting	Virgin Interactive	0171 551 0000	Centresoft	January 21st	Capcom
	Muppets	GBC	Action	Take 2	01753 854444	Jack of all Games	January 21st	Tarantula
	Revolt	DC	Racing	Acclaim	0171 344 5000	Open	January 21st	Acclaim Studios
	Special Ops	PSX	Strategy	Take 2	01753 854444	Jack of all Games	January 21st	Runecraft
	Street Fighter Alpha 3	DC	Fighting	Virgin Interactive	0171 551 0000	Centresoft	January 21st	Capcom
	Tom and Jerry	GBC	Action	Take 2	01753 854444	Jack of all Games	January 21st	Majesco
	Virtua Striker	DC	Sports	Sega	0181 995 3399	Gem	January 21st	Sega
	12 O'Clock High	PC	Strategy	Take 2	01753 854444	Jack of all Games	January 28th	Talonsoft
	Alien Nations	PC	Strategy	Infogrames	0161 827 8000	Centresoft	January 28th	Infogrames
	Battlezone 2	PC	Strategy	Activision	01895 456700	Centresoft	January 28th	Pandemic
	Big Bang	PC	Action	Acclaim	0171 344 5000	Open	January 28th	Acclaim Studios
	Cricket 2000	PSX	Sports	EA	01753 549442	Pinnacle	January 28th	EA Sports
	Gran Turismo 2	PSX	Racing	Sony	0171 533 1400	Centresoft	January 28th	Polyphony
	Imperium Gallactica 2	PC	Strategy	GT Interactive	020 8222 9700	Open	January 28th	Digital Reality
	Resident Evil 2	DC/N64	Action	Virgin Interactive	0171 551 0000	Centresoft	January 28th	Capcom
	Roadsters	DC	Racing	Virgin Interactive	0171 551 0000	Centresoft	January 28th	Titus
	South Park Rally	N64	Action	Acclaim	0171 344 5000	Open	January 28th	Acclaim Studios
	South ParkRally	PC	Racing	Acclaim	0171 344 5000	Open	January 28th	Acclaim Studios
	Team Alligator	PC	Flight Sim	GT Interactive	020 8222 9700	Open	January 28th	Simi/Kuju
	FA-18	PC	Flight Sim	EA	01753 549442	Pinnacle	February 4th	Jane's
	Tiger Woods PGA 2000	PC	Sports	EA	01753 549442	Pinnacle	February 4th	EA Sports
	Dune 2000	PSX	Strategy	EA	01753 549442	Pinnacle	February 11th	Westwood
	Crazy Taxi	DC	Driving	Sega	0181 995 3399	Gem	February 18th	Sega

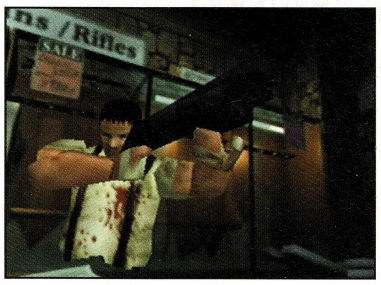
A to Z

12 O'Clock High	January 28th
3Sixty	January 7th
Age of Wonder	January 21st
Airport Inc	January 21st
Alien Nations	January 28th
Armada	January 14th
Armorines	January 14th
Battlezone 2	January 28th
Big Bang	January 28th
Crazy Taxi	February 18th
Cricket 2000	January 28th
Daffy Duck Fowl Play	January 21st
Discworld Noir	January 14th
Dune 2000	February 11th
FA-18	February 4th
Gran Turismo 2	January 28th
Imperium Gallactica 2	January 28th
Jimmy White's 2	January 7th
Marvel Vs. Capcom	January 21st
Messiah	January 7th
Muppets	January 21st
NBA Jam 2000	January 14th
NBA Live 2000	December 24th
Planescape Torment	January 7th
Renegade Racers	January 7th
Resident Evil 2	January 28th
Revolt	January 21st
Roadsters	January 28th
South Park Rally	January 28th
Special Ops	January 21st
Street Fighter Alpha	January 7th
Street Fighter Alpha 3	January 21st
Superbike 2000	February 11th
Supercross 2000	February 11th
Supercross	December 24th
Team Alligator	January 28th
Tee-Off	January 28th
The Sims	February 11th
Thrasher	January 14th
Tiger Woods PGA 2000	February 4th
Tom and Jerry	January 21st
Ultima Ascension	December 24th
Vigilante 8: 2nd Offence	January 7th
Virtua Striker	January 21st
WCW Mayhem 64	December 24th



EA creates Mayhem on N64 next week

Pre-Sell Previews



Resident Evil 2

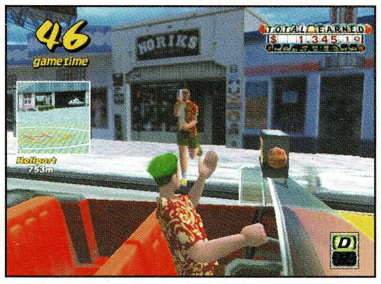
Released: **January 28th**

Format: **N64/DC**

Genre: **Action**

Publisher: **Virgin**

Tel: **0171 551 0000**



Crazy Taxi

Released: **February 18th**

Format: **Dreamcast**

Genre: **Driving**

Publisher: **Sega**

Tel: **0181 995 3399**

Computer & Video Games

"The N64 version has the added advantage of no loading times and selectable levels of gore, while the Dreamcast version boasts improved graphics."

PREVIEW

DC-UK

"Crazy Taxi is perfect arcade fare. It's fast, it's fun and it's addictive."

PREVIEW

Official Nintendo Magazine

"With its mind blowing movies, gory gun battles and tricky puzzles, RE2 has all the ingredients to be the scariest adventure game to hit the N64."

PREVIEW

Arcade

"The action is set to take place in a city based on San Francisco - perfect for outrageous crashes and stunts."

PREVIEW

Total N64

"Blood, blood, glorious blood! Get your weapons at the ready as the baddest, bloodiest and scariest game ever is set to be released on an N64 near you!"

PREVIEW

Official Dreamcast Magazine

"In a nutshell: Pure arcade racing action given a new twist."

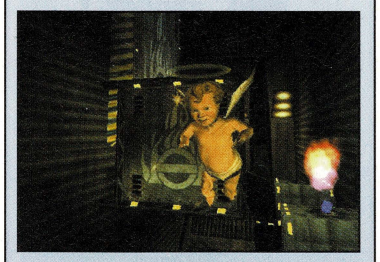
PREVIEW

Sega Release Guide

Title	Format	Date
Virtua Striker 2	DC	January 21st
Sega Bass Fishing	DC	January
NBA 2000	DC	February 18th
Crazy Taxi	DC	February 18th
Red Dog	DC	February 18th
Ecco The Dolphin	DC	April 7th

Virgin Release Guide

Title	Format	Date
Messiah	PC	January 7th
Street Fighter Alpha 3	DC	January 21st
Marvel Vs. Capcom	PSX	January 21st
Resident Evil 2	DC/N64	January 28th
Roadsters	DC	January 28th
Plasma Sword	DC	February 2000
Resident Evil	GBC	February 2000



Eagerly-awaited Messiah now set for New Year

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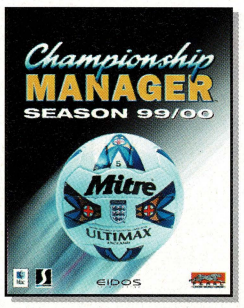

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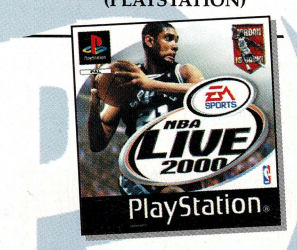

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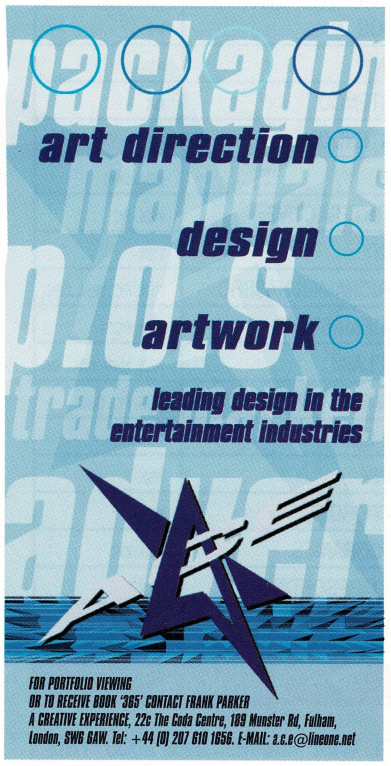
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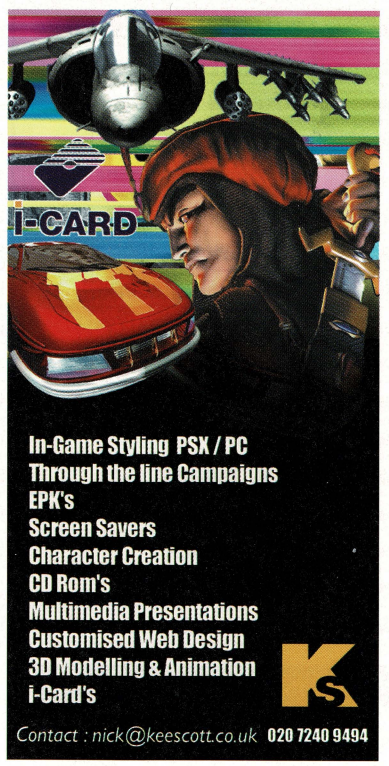

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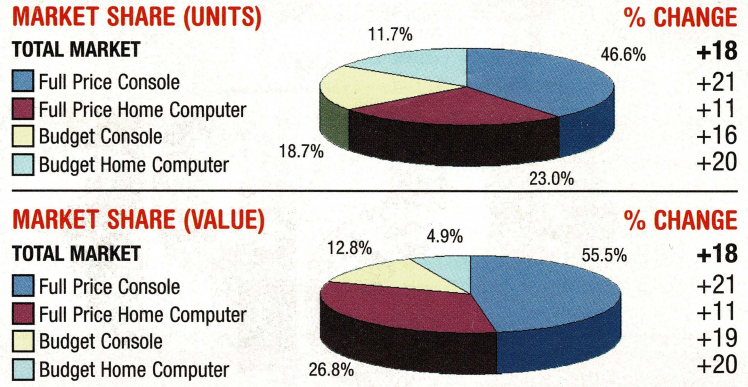
UK CONSUMER SOFTWARE CHARTS

DREAMCAST PSX PC N64 GAME BOY NEO GEO

Every week **MCV** brings you an at-a-glance guide to the UK market's top-selling software titles
All data supplied by ChartTrack and ELSPA

Market Breakdown (Week ending Dec 11th)



SINGLE FORMAT BEST-SELLERS

Format	Title	Label	Publisher
PLAYSTATION	TOMB RAIDER 4: THE LAST REVELATION	CORE DESIGN	EIDOS
NINTENDO 64	WWF WRESTLMANIA 2000	THQ	THQ
PC CD-ROM	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 99/00	EIDOS	EIDOS
GAME BOY	TARZAN ADVENTURE GAME	DISNEY	ACTIVISION
DREAMCAST	SOUL CALIBUR	NAMCO	SEGA

ALL FORMATS TOP 40

This Week	Last Week	Title	Label	Format
1	1	TOMB 4: LAST REVELATION	EIDOS	PSX, PC
2	3	FIFA 2000	EA SPORTS	PSX, PC
3	2	TOMORROW NEVER DIES	MGM/EA	PSX
4	4	CHAMP. MANAGER 99/00	EIDOS	PC
5	5	CRASH TEAM RACING	SONY	PSX
6	15	POKEMON RED	NINTENDO	GB
7	20	POKEMON BLUE	NINTENDO	GB
8	NEW	WWF WRESTLEMANIA 2000	THQ	N64, GBC
9	14	DRIVER	GT INTERACTIVE	PSX, PC
10	6	SPYRO THE DRAGON 2	SONY	PSX
11	13	WORMS ARMAGEDDON	INFOGRAMES/HASBRO	PSX, PC, N64, GBC
12	7	COLIN MCRAE RALLY	CODEMASTERS	PSX, PC
13	11	WWF ATTITUDE	ACCLAIM	PSX, N64, GBC, DC
14	8	TARZAN ACTION GAME	DISNEY/SONY/ACTIVISION	PSX, PC, GBC
15	18	RAYMAN	UBI SOFT	PSX, PC
16	17	GRAN TURISMO	SONY	PSX
17	17	AGE OF EMPIRES II	MICROSOFT	PC
18	9	UEFA STRIKER	INFOGRAMES	PSX, DC
19	10	FINAL FANTASY VIII	SQUARESOFT/SONY	PSX
20	22	LEGO RACERS	LEGO MEDIA	PC, PSX, N64
21	16	DINO CRISIS	CAPCOM/VIRGIN	PSX
22	28	THE RUGRATS	THQ	PSX, GBC
23	NEW	THIS IS FOOTBALL	SONY	PSX
24	25	TOMB RAIDER 2	EIDOS	PSX, PC
25	NEW	MEDAL OF HONOUR	EA	PSX, PC
26	23	GRAND THEFT AUTO 2	TAKE 2	PSX, PC
27	12	SOUL CALIBUR	NAMCO	DC
28	21	THE PHANTOM MENACE	LUCASARTS/ACTIVISION	PSX, PC
29	NEW	MUSIC 2000	CODEMASTERS	PSX
30	31	MISSION IMPOSSIBLE	INFOGRAMES	PSX, N64
31	29	THEME PARK WORLD	BULLFROG/EA	PC
32	27	TEKKEN 3	NAMCO/SONY	PSX
33	30	WCW MAYHEM	ELECTRONIC ARTS	PSX
34	24	UNREAL TOURNAMENT	GT INTERACTIVE/EPIC	PC
35	NEW	HALF-LIFE OPPOSING FORCE	HAVAS	PC
36	33	SUPER SMASH BROS.	NINTENDO	N64
37	RE	RAINBOW SIX	RED STORM	PSX, N64, PC
38	RE	V RALLY 2	INFOGRAMES	PC
39	26	CRASH BANDICOOT 2	SONY	PSX
40	32	SONIC ADVENTURE	SEGA	DC

PLAYSTATION: FULL-PRICE

1. Tomb Raider 4	**Eidos**
2. Tomorrow Never Dies	EA
3. FIFA 2000	EA
4. Crash Team Racing	Sony
5. Spyro the Dragon 2	Sony

NINTENDO 64

1. WWF Wrestlemania 2000	**THQ**
2. Super Smash Bros	Nintendo
3. Jet Force Gemini	Nintendo
4. Rainbow Six	Red Storm
5. Rayman 2	Ubi Soft

PC CD-ROM: FULL-PRICE

1. Champ Man. 99/00	**Eidos**
2. Tomb Raider 4	Eidos
3. Age of Empires II	Microsoft
4. Theme Park World	Bullfrog/EA
5. Unreal Tournament	GTI

GAME BOY COLOUR

1. Tarzan	**Disney**
2. Super Mario Bros.	Nintendo
3. WWF Wrestlemania 2000	THQ
4. Zelda DX	Nintendo
5. Warioland 2	Nintendo

PLAYSTATION: BUDGET

1. C. McRae Rally	**Codemasters**
2. Rayman	Ubi Soft
3. Gran Turismo	Sony
4. The Rugrats	THQ
5. Tekken 3	Sony

DREAMCAST

1. Soul Calibur	**Namco**
2. Sonic Adventure	Sega
3. UEFA Striker	Infogrames
4. WWF Attitude	Acclaim
5. Ready 2 Rumble Boxing	Midway

PC CD-ROM: BUDGET

1. Theme Hospital	**EA**
2. Art Attack	Hasbro
3. R. Tycoon Add-On	Hasbro
4. Lego Loco	Lego Media
5. Barbie as Rapunzel	TLC

NEO GEO POCKET COLOUR

1. Metal Slug: First Mission	**SNK**
2. King of Fighters R-2	SNK
3. Pac Man	SNK
4. Puzzle Bobble Mini	SNK
5. Beast Busters	SNK

ChartTrack ELSPA

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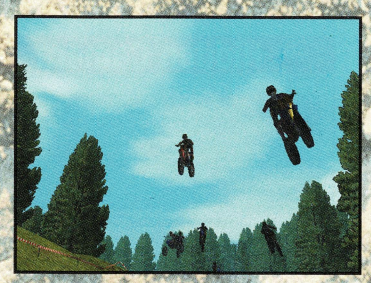

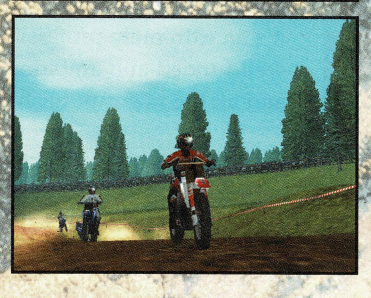

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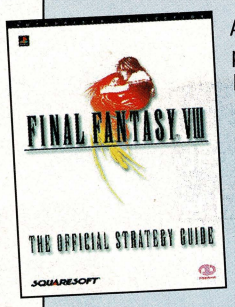


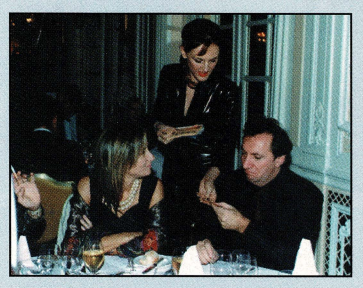
Anyone who's played a Final Fantasy game will know just how big and hard they are. Piggyback Interactive is at hand to offer some relief thanks to its Strategy Guide for the latest installment, Final Fantasy VIII.

MCV has a copy of this indispensable book to give away to five lucky winners. To be in with a chance of winning this prize answer the following question and email us at mcvproduct@hotmail.com Don't forget your postal address.

Who is the main character in Final Fantasy VIII?

A. Squall Leonheart
B. Squid Leopold
C. Squish Lemoncurd

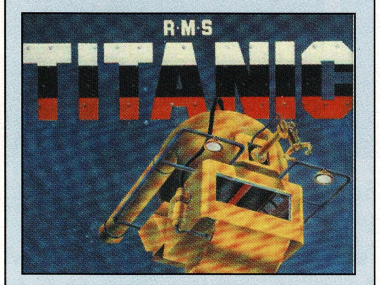
Hidden Camera



Virgin Interactive boss Tim Chaney is known throughout the industry for his charity. Here he's caught by the MCV Hidden Camera happily buying a whole raffle ticket at the recent InDin event. Sadly, he didn't win...but at least he'd insisted on getting a receipt.

Hall Of Fame

Raise the Titanic



Released: **1986**
Developer: **In-House**
Publisher: **Electric Dreams**
Format: **Spectrum/C64**

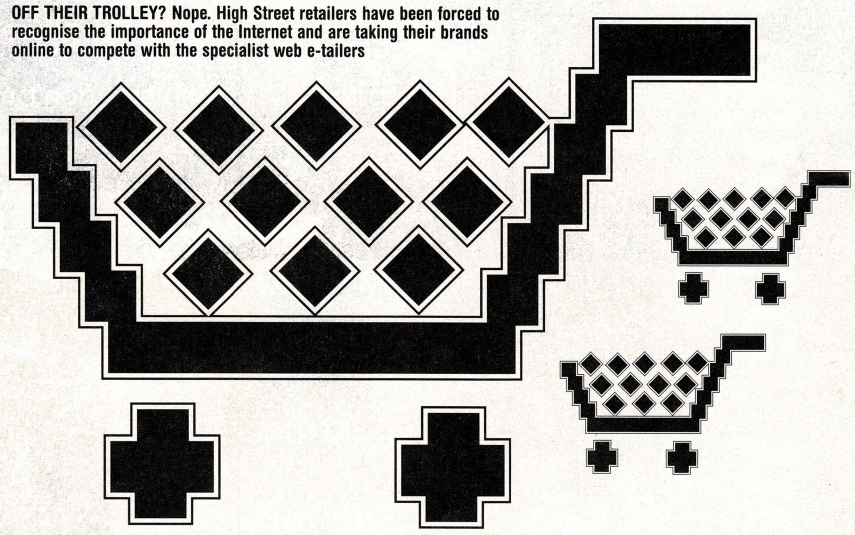
Credentials: It's not just recently that epic films or events were made into video games, as this title from Electric Dreams proved. The game's objectives were to seek out the Titanic, look for treasure and even try to raise the vessel. With over 200 rooms in a five level epic - doesn't it all sound familiar?

What happened next? Electric Dreams was at the forefront of licensed titles well before the likes of Ocean and latterly Fox signed the big movie deals. Amongst many titles from this publisher was Aliens in 1986, complete with monsters and eerie settings.

Not fully up to date with current industry lingo and market trends? Worry not, for Bluffer's Guide is here to help you through those long silences in your next big meeting...

Bluffer's Guide

No.66 E-tailing



OFF THEIR TROLLEY? Nope. High Street retailers have been forced to recognise the importance of the Internet and are taking their brands online to compete with the specialist web e-tailers

Yeah, nice one, sorted. Got any, er, doves?
As I think you probably know, I'm talking about net-based commerce rather than shady dealings in disco biscuits. And by the way, the drug-smart yoof speak? It would have made Roger Bennett snigger.

Okay, okay. So tell me about legit e-tailing then?
It's all the rage. Specialist e-tailers are cropping up every week and the major High Street chains are also taking their brands online, with Electronics Boutique the latest to take the plunge.

Who's leading the way?
Certainly the most high profile games e-tailer is Gameplay, a company established by ex-Domark boss Mark Strachan looking to 'do an Amazon' in interactive entertainment.

And already it's a major force in retailing?
Well, er, no. In terms of turnover its online sales are more cornershop than super-chain, but it's an extremely professional, well-funded and ambitious set-up and all the major publishers have been convinced enough by its potential to establish accounts.

Any other admirers?
BSkyB. Murdoch's media group snapped up 10 per cent of Gameplay last week.

Crikey, this is serious stuff.
Well the point is, everyone thinks it could be, so no one wants to get left out.

Except the indies, presumably. I imagine those arch traditionalists will take a lot of persuading to abandon boxes, masking tape and shelf wobblers.
On the contrary, some specialists may fear e-tailing, but the majority are embracing it. It's the chains that are dragging their feet - EB still doesn't seem convinced. According to MCV's survey, nearly 70 per cent of independent outlets are either already selling online or plan to do so in the next 12 months. Online could be dominated by shiny new-start-ups like Gameplay and good old indies in new clothes.

Good God. Got any drugs?
Not personally, but I believe it's pretty easy to buy them off the Internet. ▮

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MCV CONTACTS

Editor: Stuart Dinsey
Stuart.Dinsey@mcvuk.com
Deputy Editor: Lisa Foster
Lisa.Foster@mcvuk.com
Senior Staff Writer: Steve Merrett
Steve.Merrett@mcvuk.com
Staff Writer: George Kotsiofides
George.Kotsiofides@mcvuk.com
Publishing Assistant: Matt Camp
Matt.Camp@mcvuk.com
Contributing Editor: Dave Roberts
Dave.Roberts@idnet.co.uk

Sales Director: Alexandra Jarvis
Alex.Jarvis@mcvuk.com
Sales Executive: Richard Cross
Richard.Cross@mcvuk.com
Circulation & Marketing: Hannah Short
Hannah.Short@mcvuk.com
Design: Stuart Moody
Stuart.Moody@mcvuk.com
Development Editor: Owain Bennallack
Owain.Bennallack@virgin.net
Photography: Nic Cooper

Contributors: Tim Green, Christoph Holowaty, Andy Hutchinson, Chris Ratcliff, Mike Anderiesz, Derek De La Fuente, Mike Wheeler-Wyatt, Julian Ireland, Mike Sabine, Christian Svensson, David Gibbon, Warren Harrod

MCV World Network: **Australia:** Sam Stewart **Benelux:** Harry Van Horen **Central Europe:** Nick Pendrell **France:** Romain Poirot-Lellig **Italy:** Riccardo Albini **Japan:** Saori Morishige **Scandinavia:** Eric Franzen

Managing Director: Stuart Dinsey
01992 535688 Stuart.Dinsey@mcvuk.com
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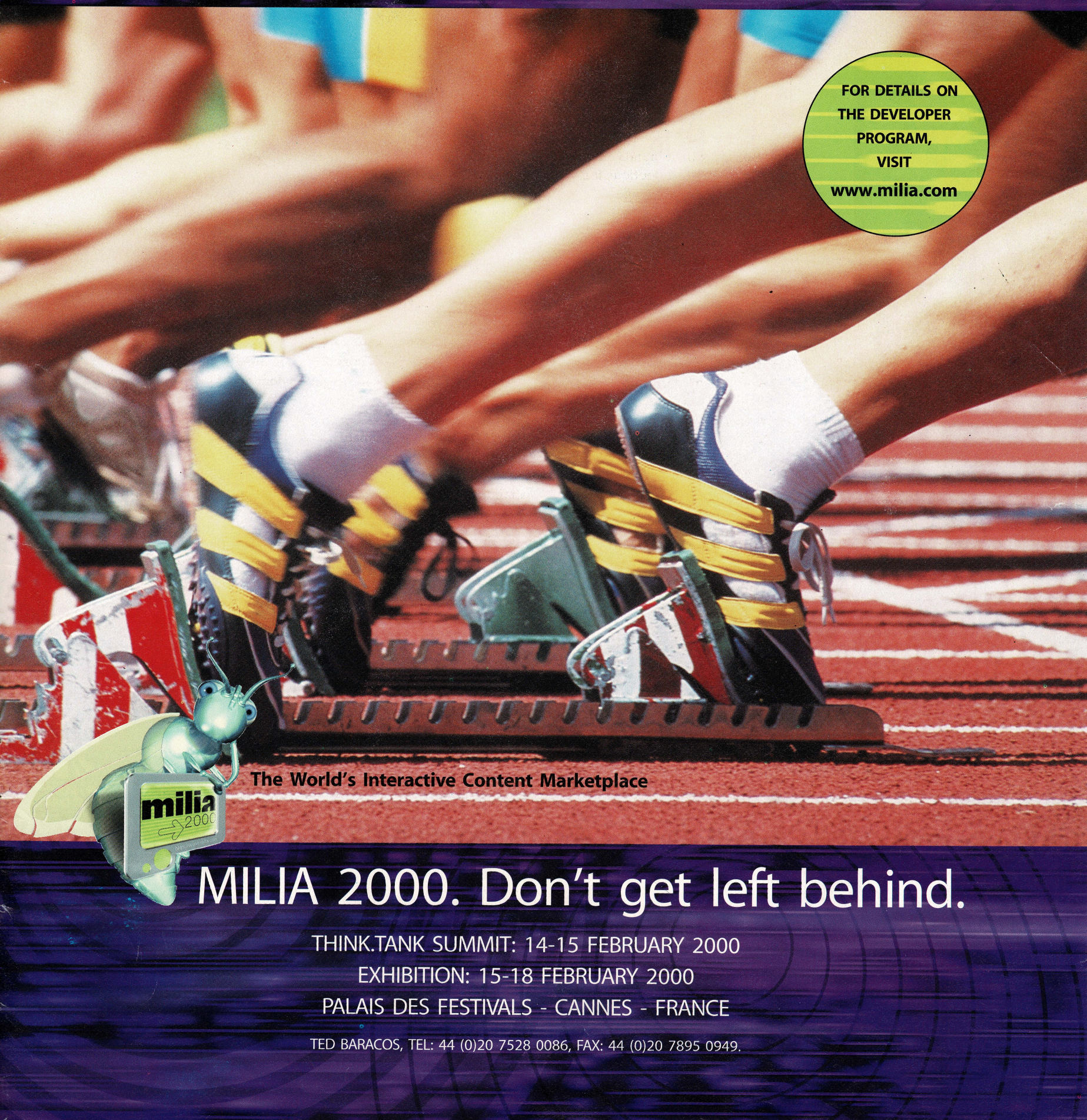
It's all about Speed.

As you read this, new high bandwidth distribution channels are at work redefining the market for interactive entertainment content.

Get wise and gear up for this new high-speed reality at Milia 2000 where developers, publishers and distributors are connecting with senior executives from broadband networks, ISP's, interactive TV, digital broadcast and telecoms in the race to shape the future of digital entertainment content.

And in the run up to the Milia exhibition don't miss the opportunity to get firmly on the right track with the THINK. TANK SUMMIT Conferences, an exclusive two-day cross-industry conference and networking event for forward-looking interactive industry leaders.



MILIA 2000. Don't get left behind.

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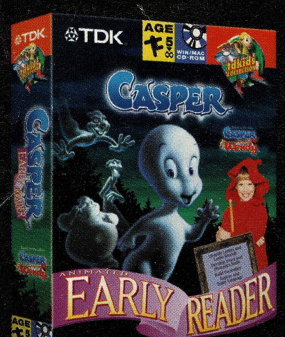

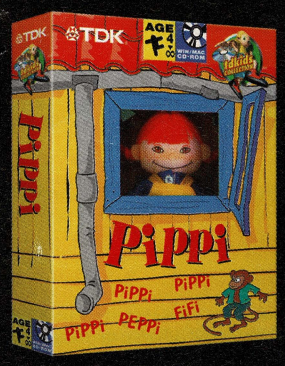

With Littlefoot and his chums from The Land before Time, learning kindergarten essentials and arithmetic means loads of fun. Various scenarios derived from the famous films include age-specific skill training to suit children's learning needs. Plus, problems solved earn Dino Bucks with which kids can "pay" for memorable film clips from The Land Before Time. Moreover, a progress monitor helps to identify individual problem areas for supplementary instruction. Trust pals like these to make sums as easy as 1,2,3.

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